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THE YALE CUP

BOOKS BY ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY

Phillips Exeter Series

Illustrated. 12mo. Cloth.

FOLLOWING THE BALL.
MAKING THE NINE.
IN THE LINE.
WITH MASK AND MITT.
THE GREAT YEAR.
THE YALE CUP.
A FULL-BACK AFLOAT.
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SAM FORGED AHEAD, CLEARING EVERY OBSTACLE JUST IN FRONT OF HIS RIVAL. — *Page 284.*

PHILLIPS EXETER SERIES

THE YALE CUP

BY

ALBERTUS T. DUDLEY

AUTHOR OF "FOLLOWING THE BALL," "MAKING THE
NINE," "IN THE LINE," "WITH MASK AND
MITT," "THE GREAT YEAR"

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES COPELAND



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THE YALE CUP.

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1

TO THE MANY
PLEASANT YOUNG FRIENDS
WHO, CONSCIOUSLY OR UNCONSCIOUSLY, HAVE
ASSISTED IN THE MAKING OF
THIS BOOK

BOOK 11
1868
1869

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THE YALE CUP



CHAPTER I

AN EXPERT PACKER

"ALL packed?" inquired Robert Owen, inserting his head through the door of Number 7 Hale and sweeping the scene of confusion with a curious glance. Satisfied to accept the evidence of his eyes in lieu of a definite reply, Owen was just closing the door again when one of the Peck twins, who inhabited the room, sang out: "Hi there, Bobby! Come in here a minute!"

Owen let himself in and set his back against the door.

"You call that packing, do you?" he asked, looking with a grin of amusement at a big trunk which gaped at him with wide-distended jaws, the whole front of the tray showing like a flaunting tongue. "Whose trunk is that?"

THE YALE CUP

"Don's," replied Duncan.

"Why don't you take some of the things out and put them in yours?"

"Because he's going straight home, and I'm not," retorted Duncan.

"That lid will never go down," said Owen, who had been examining the overfed monster. "You'll have to repack."

"Repack! Why, what's the matter with that packing? That wasn't done the way Blossom does his — fill a pillowcase and hammer it down with a baseball bat — that's all hand work." He came nearer and whispered in Owen's ear: "I don't want it repacked. I put in a couple of old bottles that I picked up down back of Porter's. There'll be something doing when mother unpacks them."

Donald came out of his bedroom. "Do you think it will go?" he asked of neither in particular, gazing doubtfully at the problem.

"Of course it will," said Duncan, promptly, "if you put weight enough on it. Try it, Bob, and see what your hundred and eighty will do."

AN EXPERT PACKER

"Hundred sixty-eight," corrected Owen, as he mounted the incline. The lid sank to within four inches of its proper place.

"I'm afraid we've got to take some things out," sighed Donald.

"If you take out anything, it will have to be that box of specimens," remarked Duncan, shrewdly. The box of specimens was the one thing which Donald would not want to leave behind.

Donald meditated.

"Let's try to snap it," proposed Duncan. "Bob and I will get on one end and jump it down. You try to catch the fastening when it comes right. Then when we get one tight, we'll down the other."

This method actually proved effective. Donald caught the fastening at one end at the fourth attempt; the weight of all three brought the second fastening into place. The lid fortunately was strongly made and the hinges held. Donald locked the trunk and put the key in his pocket, while Owen and Duncan pulled the strap to a hole beyond the power of any porter to loosen.

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Then they drew long breaths and contemplated the work of their hands.

"It's like a bale of hay," said Duncan in triumph. Donald, however, seemed not wholly satisfied.

"I wish it had iron bands round it. If the thing bursts, I shall be all to the bad."

"That strap's as good as an iron band," spoke his twin, reassuringly. "Things go a great deal better when they're packed tight; I've heard mother say so often."

"Why don't you go together?" asked Owen, marvelling that the twins, who belonged together like the two halves of a walnut, should actually be at the point of separation.

"That's a personal question, but I'll condescend to answer it," returned Duncan, a little sheepishly. "Don, of course, has passed all his exams. I only got recommended in three, and I believe I've flunked 'em all. So I'm going down to Uncle Will's till after the Fourth, and then I'm to tutor in Cambridge. If I get a decent number of points in the fall, I'm coming back here. If I don't, I've got to go to work."



DONALD CAUGHT THE FASTENING AT ONE END AT THE FOURTH ATTEMPT. — *Page 3.*



AN EXPERT PACKER

"Shall you keep your room?"

Duncan nodded. "It doesn't cost anything to do that. They've given me a room-mate too, a tall, bony fellow, named Archer. Upper middler. Hails from Portland."

"You've seen him, then?"

"No. He's related to the Sedgwicks, and he was there the other day. That's his description as I got it from Wally. When are you going?"

"To-day. I may as well say good-by." Owen held out a hand which Duncan gripped.

"I don't suppose you'll ever be seen here again," said the Peck, ruefully. "You'll have to come with the freshman teams, though, won't you?"

"If I can make any," answered Owen, lightly.

"Make any!" Duncan sniffed. "If you call that modesty, I don't. It's pure affectation. You know you could make the Varsity nine, if they'd let freshmen play."

"I shall come up anyway, whether I play with the freshmen or not," pursued Owen, disregarding Duncan's flattering comment. "I shall want to turn up here occasionally to see the old place and the pros and the people I know."

THE YALE CUP

"Gee! wouldn't it be sport when you're all through and aren't afraid of anybody!" exclaimed Duncan, his tongue hurrying after his imagination. "I'd walk up to Doc Rounder and say, 'How-de-do, Doctor Rounder! How's that fine dog of yours?' Doc would smile all over and begin to crack the mongrel up. Then I'd tell him that the pup looked pretty well for such an old dog, and ask if the police really did shoot at him for snapping at people. I'd see Hayes and thank him for all he taught me—he was always telling me that I was the only fellow he'd ever had whom he couldn't teach anything to—and josh him about his chickens. I'd call on old Moore and get him going about the school spirit. I'd —"

"You'd better wait till you graduate before you plan to come back to show yourself off," interrupted Owen, laughing.

"That's a fact," returned Duncan, suddenly reduced to humility. "Most likely I shall be doing the errand-boy stunt in my father's office. Don'll have to be the one to come back."

"I'm never coming back," said Don, de-

AN EXPERT PACKER

cidedly. "I'm down on the place. They're always looking for a chance to fire you, and they haven't given Dun a fair show. When he's a great man, I hope he'll be elected trustee and cut down all their salaries."

"That's just what I'd do," declared Duncan. "And what I took off from the salaries of the profs I don't like I'd give to those who are on the square."

"I can guess who'd get an increase," Owen remarked.

"Not very hard to do that. I wish you'd guess how I'm going to get twelve points this summer."

"Buck up and work, you idiot!" cried Donald, impatiently.

"That's what I'm going to do, isn't it?" Duncan retorted. "I know what I'm up against without your rubbing it in."

At this juncture Owen, regardless of the fact that by staying five minutes longer and using a little diplomacy he could involve the twins in a first-class scrap, virtuously said good-by and returned, somewhat depressed, to his packing. He liked Duncan Peck too well to hear of his

THE YALE CUP

troubles with unconcern. He hoped sincerely that the boy would get off a lot of points in September, and that the new room-mate would prove to be of the right sort.

CHAPTER II

ARCHER RECEIVES

THE middle of September was past. The school authorities had survived the worst of the confusion of registering, allotting rooms, smothering complaints, turning away unpromising applicants, evading the tearful entreaties of parents, arranging schedules, laying down rules. The second-hand furniture dealers were sold out, having reaped a cash harvest of a hundred per cent on goods bought of the mortally impecunious three months before. The student dealers in fountain pens and athletic supplies were making hay in dazzling sunshine. Football, the great industry of autumn, clamored for devotees. The first notes of the year-long wail over the food at Alumni Hall already floated in the air. With screech of bearings and groan of ill-fitting machinery, the Seaton mill had begun its one hundred and twenty-third

THE YALE CUP

manufacturing season. Would the product be worth while? It depended quite as much on the quality of the raw material provided as on the process of manufacture.

Sam Archer came to Seaton with vague but highly colored expectations, due in no small measure to the entertaining reminiscences of adventure and romance which his Uncle Fred delighted to tell. Uncle Fred had preceded him in school by twenty-odd years. The school had been smaller then, and the life simpler. The boys still boarded around the village in private houses, the sports were general affairs requiring no special training, the school itself formed a big fraternity with few distinctions except such as come naturally to superior personality. Uncle Fred, being a bright, friendly, whole-souled fellow, learning easily and possessing a natural aptitude for games of all kinds, had been a conspicuous figure in the school. He looked backward upon his Seaton days as the happiest period of his life; Sam looked forward to his with an eagerness born of long-fondled hopes.

Sam moved into 7 Hale, to which he had been assigned, and waited to see what kind of a comrade

ARCHER RECEIVES

this appointed room-mate was to be. When two days went by without sign of a Peck, he called at the office and learned that the absentee was expected on the morrow; his coming, however, depended on the results of the examinations which he was taking in Cambridge; if he did not appear, another room-mate would be provided.

Ruminating dolefully on this uncertainty about a most important matter, Sam reached home in time to catch a caller who was just turning from the door. It was Bruce, a good-looking fellow of the ruling oligarchy — likewise captain of the track team. He had been pointed out to Sam on the first day of school.

“Hello!” called Bruce. “Do you live in this entry?”

“Yes,” responded Sam, “in Number 7. My name’s Archer.”

“Then you’re the fellow I’m looking for. Where’s Duncan Peck?”

Sam opened the door for his caller. “He hasn’t come yet. I’ve just been to the office to see about it. They didn’t seem sure that he’d come at all.”

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"I'm awfully afraid that he won't, myself. He wrote me that he had to make twelve points to get back. I don't believe he can get twelve points in twelve years."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Archer, politely.

"No, I thank you. I've got to get home." The visitor gave a glance at Sam's lanky figure. "— Do anything in athletics?"

"Not much," replied Sam, modestly. "I played football and baseball in the high school, but our teams wouldn't be called anything here. I ran the high hurdles too."

"Did you?" The track captain's interest became keen immediately. "What time have you made?"

"Nothing very good. Eighteen seconds was my best."

Bruce's eagerness languished. "You ought to do better than that. If you don't play football, get Collins to help you this fall."

When the next day passed and no Peck appeared, Sam quietly moved the furniture of the stay-away to the other bedroom, and took up his quarters in the corner room, which possessed obvious ad-

ARCHER RECEIVES

vantages over its mate. The reasoning here was as straight as Euclid. This unknown quantity, Peck, as original occupant, enjoyed a prior claim to the desirable room. Against all later comers the Archer claim took precedence. Any claim, however good, is strengthened by actual occupancy. If Peck wasn't coming, Sam might as well have the room as give it to some one else.

That evening Archer received a call from three inhabitants of his "well." They came in boldly, addressed him jauntily, and proceeded to throw the sofa pillows at each other and his own surprised self. Presently one grabbed a baseball bat and called for a game with the pillows. Another seized a tennis racquet and began to whack a ball with indefinite recklessness, but largely at Archer's head. When one of the missiles narrowly escaped the shade of his new lamp, Sam, whose ire had been rising, waded into the chief offender, threw him down and beat him hard with the pillow, was pulled off by another, on whom he immediately turned with the same vigor, gave cuffs and received them, and was finally, after a hard struggle, subdued by the combined efforts of the three. After this the

THE YALE CUP

trio let him up, shook hands with him, assured him that he was "all right," and departed suddenly. They had hardly time to escape into a room close at hand, and Sam to pick up his cushions and the tennis ball, when an ominous knock was heard at the door, and Mr. Alsop appeared.

"What's all this noise, Archer?" he began sharply. "Don't you understand that no roughhousing is tolerated in this building?"

"Yes, sir," panted Sam, non-committal.

"What's been going on here?"

"I've had some visitors."

Mr. Alsop eyed him sternly. "Who were they?"

Now this was a very wrong question for Mr. Alsop to put. If he had possessed half as much common sense as energy and devotion to supposed duty, he would never have asked it. He counted on the newcomer's inexperience, and hoped to get a grip on two or three unruly characters in his well, which would help him in maintaining order in his territory later on. He did not consider that in extorting evidence from the new boy he would be exposing the thoughtless betrayer to months

ARCHER RECEIVES

of annoyance and contemptuous treatment at the hands of the mischief-makers. Fortunately Archer's instinct was truer than the instructor's.

"I don't know their names," he said.

"Describe them!"

"I don't think I can, sir."

Mr. Alsop threw at the incompetent a glance of scorn. "Well, you can send them to me."

Archer's look glanced from Mr. Alsop's angry face to the door of his bedroom, thence to the floor, thence squarely back again to the teacher.

"I'd rather not, sir."

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Alsop had shot his bolt; he was not prepared to make an issue of the refusal of a boy to betray his associates. "You can at least tell them that if this thing is repeated, you are likely to get into serious trouble!— You can do that without offending your sense of honor, I hope?" he added, with an accent of sarcasm.

"Yes, sir."

The teacher turned and retraced his way to his rooms downstairs. Two doors were pushed quietly open as he reached a lower floor. From each

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emerged a studious boy holding a finger between the leaves of a book. The pair crept to the stair railing, heard the steps descend the last flight, and a door close. Then they scurried for Archer's room.

"What did he say?" demanded the first eagerly as soon as the door was shut behind him.

Archer began an account of the conversation.

"Did you give us away?" interrupted number two.

"Wait till I am through, can't you?" responded Sam. "No, of course I didn't."

"Shut up, Lordie, and let him tell it!" commanded the other. "We want it all."

Archer finished his repetition, omitting nothing.

"You're the right stuff," declared the one called Lordie. "Just like the old sneak to try to get it out of you because you're new. Last year he got little Roberts fired for nothing at all. He thinks he's the whole institution — faculty, trustees, and all."

The door opened abruptly. Number three rushed in and closed the door softly behind him. "Look out! he's coming again!"

ARCHER RECEIVES

Numbers one and two dived for the bedroom. Number three settled into a chair and opened an *Anabasis* which lay on the top of a pile of books on the table. There was a gentle tap at the door.

"Come in!" called Archer. Mr. Alsop entered.

"Visitors again so soon?" he asked, seeking to cover his suspicion with an air of pleasantry. "You seem to have made friends early, Archer." He glanced at the book which lay open on the lap of number three. "I didn't know you took Greek, Taylor."

"I don't," answered Taylor. "I just picked the book up. Looks hard, doesn't it?"

"I don't think it is really any harder than a modern language, if the modern language is seriously studied. In fact, many teachers are of the opinion that the college requirement in Greek is easier than that in German."

Neither Archer nor Taylor disputed or commented on this opinion. "Won't you sit down, sir?" said Archer, suddenly recalling his obligation to a guest.

"No, I thank you," replied Mr. Alsop. "I returned to speak of something which I ought to

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have emphasized when I was here a few moments ago. The responsibility for order in the dormitories is really laid upon the students themselves. Every student is expected to see to it that no unseemly disturbance is made, and that nothing is done to interfere with the studies of others. The whole matter is left in your hands, and you are put on your honor to do nothing unworthy of the dignity and name of the school. It's in the dormitory life that the spirit of the school especially shows itself. We trust you to conduct yourselves like gentlemen, without being watched, and put you on your honor to do so."

"Yes, sir," replied Archer, conscious of a peculiar feeling, a mixture of approval of the theory and suspicion as to the practice.

"That is all that I wanted to say. Good night!"

The boys echoed the salutation piously, and the room was left in momentary quiet. Soon the two hidden worthies emerged from the bedroom, and pranced across the floor, chuckling.

"My eye!" cried Lord. "Did you ever hear such stuff? He puts you on your honor, and then tries to make you tell who rough-housed you, and

ARCHER RECEIVES

comes sneaking up here to see if he can't catch some one. That's a good one!"

"Just go and tell him something in confidence and see what would happen!" exclaimed Fowle (so his name proved to be; his mates called him "Birdie"). "He'd bring it all up before the faculty, and you'd be fired like a shot, as Murphy was last year. That's *his* kind of honor."

"Are they all like that?" asked Archer, in consternation. He had been taught to respect his teachers.

"No, only about half," said Lord. "There are some I'd be willing to tell anything to, and do 'most anything for. There are others who aren't worth wasting cusses on. Alsop thinks he's the greatest man since Washington — and what is he?" He snapped his fingers contemptuously.

"When's Peck coming?" demanded Taylor, abruptly.

"He was due yesterday, if he passed his exams."

"Too bad if he doesn't come. He's an awfully good fellow and lots of sport. Know him?"

Archer shook his head. Fowle took occasion, while his friends were intent on this conversation,

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to make a good shot at Lord with a sofa pillow. Lord seized the pillow, but made a wild return. Fowle jeered. The fracas seemed in a fair way to begin again when Taylor interfered, and with forceful prophecies of the fate that would befall them all if they got to rough-housing again, persuaded the pair to "quit their fooling" and take themselves off.

That same afternoon Mr. Peck's stenographer brought him a telegram, which ran thus: —

"Got ten points what shall I do send money quick."

The father dictated immediately the following answer: —

"Go back to Seaton try again will send chock there."

The next day Archer saw his room-mate.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

ARCHER came in from French next morning feeling depressed. Mr. Alsop had caught him on an unmastered point in the lesson, and had then made him the subject of pleasantries which, though they seemed to the teacher merely casual examples of his innate cleverness, cut the sensitive boy to the quick. Of course the boy was foolish to be sensitive; one of the incidental advantages of the Seaton system is that while it may develop in the pupil a precocious sharpness and suspiciousness, it also accustoms him to hard knocks. Sam, however, could not avoid the impression that he was paying the penalty for Mr. Alsop's defeat of the evening before. As he felt himself innocent of wrong-doing, his pride and his sense of justice were both offended.

He closed the door behind him and let the catch down; to keep the door locked seemed the easiest way to avoid trouble. As he turned, he was

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startled to see in the doorway of the second bedroom a coatless lad gazing at him with critical chilliness.

"Scared of burglars, or is some one after you?" asked the stranger, scornfully.

"Neither!" retorted Archer. "Who are you?"

"Peck! I suppose you're the fellow this wise faculty has seen fit to tie me up with."

"I'm Archer," said Sam, curtly, resenting the contempt latent in Duncan Peck's words.

"That's a pretty name. It'll look well on a card on the door. What's your other name? Reginald?"

"No — Sam."

"Sam! That's a come-down after Archer. I'll call you Archer; you call me Peck. I'll take one side of the room, you the other. You've turned me out of my bedroom, I see."

"Yes. I thought you weren't coming. You can change again if you want to."

"It isn't worth the trouble. What do you want to lock yourself in for?"

"Some fellows came in here last night and raised a row. I wanted to be let alone." Sam gave a

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

short account of the experiences of the evening before.

“They won’t try that again now that I’ve got here,” Peck made complacent answer. “It’s foolish to get us into trouble with Alsop,” he added, his tone hardening. “He’ll be down on the room the whole year. It’ll take a lot of soft soap to make him feel right again.”

Sam was silent, convicted of having brought the room into suspicion by unwise conduct, yet puzzled to see wherein his error lay. He was disappointed, too, by the coldness and unfriendliness of this room-mate whom everybody had described as jolly and agreeable.

Peck put on his coat and went to the door. “I guess we can get along together if we let each other alone. Only don’t keep the door locked; I may sometime want to come in.”

Duncan went his way to the house which his fraternity made its headquarters, a little ashamed of his ugliness, but firm in the opinion that this new Archer was a “fresh guy” who would require repression to make him endurable. If Duncan had been forced to give grounds for this dislike,

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he could in honesty have advanced but two. With the first, Archer was in no way concerned: Duncan did not want a dormitory room-mate at all; he wanted to room with his friends of the Alpha Beta Gamma at Knowles's. His father, however, who saw in this scheme but an additional incentive to waste time, had vetoed it at once, and written privately to the office to make sure that his son should receive a "good, quiet, studious room-mate" who might help him to become in his turn good, quiet, and studious. By what method of induction the office arrived at the conclusion that Samuel Wadsworth Archer was such a boy is not worth investigation; the office has its whims, and they are not always wrong.

Duncan's second objection was personal. In moving him out of the bedroom which he had occupied for two years, calmly putting his household goods on the sidewalk, as it were, and taking possession, Archer had shown himself to be a fellow of a consummate and incurable insolence. Duncan didn't care for the bedroom, — at least, so he assured himself, — but with a fellow of that stamp he wouldn't even condescend to quarrel.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Duncan did not appear again until just before his afternoon recitation; the evening also he spent elsewhere. During the next day he was at home for hardly two of his waking hours, and during this time he was either dressing or undressing in his bedroom, or talking with fellows who came in, or working at his desk. He was not impolite, and he spoke pleasantly enough when he found occasion to speak at all; but he indulged in no unnecessary conversation and asked no favors, while his general manner indicated clearly his purpose that community of room should not involve community of life.

Sam, though inexperienced, was not wholly dense. He understood that his room-mate meant to have nothing to do with him, and at first felt both humiliated and hurt. But pride soon came to the rescue. If he was not good enough for Peck, neither was Peck good enough for him; he had no reason to be ashamed either of himself or of his family. If Peck did not want his society, he certainly could dispense with the companionship of Peck. This appeal to pride gave him a certain peace of mind and

THE YALE CUP

stayed him also against discouragements from another source.

In his high school Archer had been considered athletic. He had played on the eleven and on the nine, and still held the school record in the high hurdles. At Seaton he found himself judged by different standards. When he drifted out on the Seaton campus with twoscore football candidates, he confessed to himself sadly that he belonged in the lower third. He possessed too much length and too little breadth and weight ever to be a factor in the Seaton games. The only advantage which he could surely claim over the average impossible who enlivens the playing fields during the first fortnight with brand-new trousers and awkward zeal, was that, being long-legged, he could kick. The Seaton coaches wanted men who could kick, but they didn't want men who could do nothing else. The best that could come within Archer's reach was a place on the second, or on his class eleven.

The failure to make good in football had been in a measure anticipated. In the hurdles, however, Archer had permitted himself certain ambi-

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

tions, which, though unexpressed, represented warmly cherished hopes. Now Collins, the trainer, who had got him out to display his paces, told him bluntly that he must learn to sprint before he could do anything worth while. It wasn't enough to pace his distance properly and clear the barriers; he must mount in better form and get speed into his three strides between the hurdles. Archer, being strongly of the opinion that sprinters are born, not made, took this exhortation as an adverse judgment, — especially as it was coupled with the information that Fairmount's regular racing time was a second under his record, while Kilham of Hillbury was good for at least one-fifth better.

Sam thought the whole subject over as he sat alone in his room after dinner on the day of the experiment with the hurdles. It was clear that he must accustom himself to an entirely new point of view. The sooner he was reconciled to being classed with the mediocrities, the better it would be for him. Duncan Peck's conduct indicated that his personality was not especially taking; his recitation work was not brilliant, and he sus-

THE YALE CUP

pected that his conversation gave no assurance of great mental gifts; his only hope in athletics was to plod along the trail after the leaders and pick up what they might leave. The outlook for distinction was not promising — but why must he win distinction? Was it not better to acknowledge in all humility the commonplace character of his endowment, and go cheerfully forward doing his best all round, and letting results take care of themselves? He might play football for fun on the class team; he might take hurdle practice for exercise and amusement, without hope of silver cups and gold medals and the sight of his portrait in the Boston papers. He could certainly meet Duncan Peck like a polite and self-respecting fellow who courted nobody's patronage and understood a sentiment expressed in manner quite as well as one voiced in rough words.

CHAPTER IV

BRUCE GIVES ADVICE

THE autumn weeks that slipped by had little effect on the relations of the two boys in 7 Hale. Duncan thought less ill of Archer after longer experience with him: he was not especially fresh after all; he minded his own business, and did not presume, or pretend, or brag, or fish for Duncan's friends. On the other hand, he was not as particular in the matter of clothes as Duncan liked his friends to be. Archer's coat was not always fresh from the tailor's goose, the turn-up of his trousers was usually imperfect, his neckties were carelessly chosen, and did not match his socks. His tastes, moreover, were too democratic; he showed a disposition to like everybody; rich or poor, clodhopper or aristocrat, athlete or grind — he accepted them all as parts of the same world with equal rights to favor and friendship. Archer nodded to every fellow he met;

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so did Duncan, but Duncan's nods were carefully graduated to the person. On one fellow he bestowed a short formal jerk of the head, which, accurately translated, read, "This is my duty greeting, even you receive it." To another the nod was a conscious expression of friendliness; a smile that lighted up the face went with this salute, and a jolly word that had a personal ring. Archer drew the line at meanness and a dirty shirt; Duncan's line was farther up, separating the few who were supposed to be of the right sort from the many who were not.

When once the principle was established that their ways lay apart, it was easier to follow the diverging paths than to bring them together. At first Peck thought Archer fresh and ordinary, and did not care for him. At first Archer was offended at Peck's foolish snobbishness, and proudly disregarded him. The attitudes thus taken both maintained through obstinacy, after each had discovered that he was at least partially wrong. Archer waited for Peck, who had established the precedent, to change it. With Peck the loss of the favorite room still rankled, and

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he held that advances toward reconciliation should come from the aggressor. So they tacitly agreed that they must always disagree.

Bruce came to the door one day demanding Peck, or information as to where he could be found. Archer replied in emphatic terms that he knew nothing about Peck's affairs.

"Isn't he ever here?" asked the track captain, in a tone of vexation.

"Come at midnight and you'll find him. He's here to sleep."

Bruce looked thoughtfully at Archer. "He ought to stay at home more," he said, after a slight pause. "He won't do any work, knocking about from room to room."

Archer gave an impatient jerk of his shoulders. "It's none of my business what he does. I think he goes away to avoid me."

"Why should he?"

"I don't know. He doesn't like me, I suppose."

"He and Don used to fight like cat and dog, but they always stuck to the nest," Bruce mused. "What have you done to him?"

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"Nothing. He just doesn't like me. You can't blame him for that."

Bruce had been talking with Collins that morning, and the trainer had spoken a good word for the long-legged recruit to the hurdling force, not on account of what he could do, but because of the spirit he showed. Bruce was fond of whimsical Duncan. He was well disposed, also, to the recruit.

"Didn't you throw him out of his room?"

Sam flushed uneasily. "Yes, and I offered to give it back to him. He said it wasn't worth the trouble of changing."

"Duncan is a little queer. He takes things hard sometimes. The more he feels a thing, the less he likes to talk about it."

The visitor departed, leaving Sam to puzzle over this new light on the actions of his incomprehensible room-mate. On first impulse he vowed that if Peck was such a fool that he wouldn't say plainly what he wanted, his wants didn't deserve consideration. Sam himself, in Peck's circumstances, would not have hesitated an instant; he might have been annoyed, but he

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would have declared his annoyance frankly; he wouldn't have played the sorehead. But was there really any ground for annoyance? Sam imagined himself in Peck's place, and answered immediately "yes." In fact, the more he considered it, the more serious the offence became. A fourth-year boy unceremoniously bundled out of his old quarters by a newcomer because of a few days' delay in arriving, and then calmly told he might move himself back if he wished! It was a fresh thing to do; Sam squirmed in his chair under the lash of his own conscience; however silly on the part of Peck to pout like a foolish school-girl, there was no defence for that act.

The recitation bell gave forth its dreary clang; Peck rushed in, took some books from his desk and started for the door.

"Bruce has been here," said Archer.

"I saw him," replied Peck, as he crossed the threshold.

This exchange of chilly brevities jarred on Sam's perturbed feelings. No one but a lobster or a sorehead would sulk that way! It would be of no use to offer apologies to such a fellow.

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The only course was to say nothing and replace the furniture.

Glad to do something to make amends for his error, Sam dug out Birdie Fowle from the room opposite, led him into Number 7, and set forth his demands. By concentration of will power, he at length succeeded in giving Birdie's good-natured inclination to do anything anybody asked of him, the victory over his disinclination to do anything at all. Together they hustled Sam's bedroom furniture and general movables into the study, placed Peck's bed in the corner room, moved his bureau without disturbing the articles on top, and hung his wall ornaments in corresponding positions in the new quarters. The contents of his own closet Sam cleared out, but Peck's he left unprofaned for the owner himself to change. After that, the pair dumped Sam's possessions miscellaneously in the inferior room, and adjourned to Porter's drug store for consolatory fudges at Archer's expense.

When Sam returned he found Peck standing on the threshold of his old room, looking unpleasantly surprised.

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"What have you been doing now?" he demanded, as Sam entered the study.

"Birdie and I have just put your things back in your old room," answered Archer. "We did it carefully. I don't think anything is hurt. You'll have to shift your clothes yourself."

"You take a lot of liberties with other people's property!" commented Peck, savagely. "You seem used to moving. Your family must be in the habit of changing tenements whenever rent-day comes round."

At this slash Sam laughed outright. His family had inhabited the same house for four generations. It was one of the recognized ornaments of the city, pointed out to every stranger. "The last time we moved was in 1790," he said quietly.

"What!"

"And I naturally don't remember much about it. My great-grandfather did the moving."

Peck stared for a few silent seconds. "Well, you're certainly making up for your ancestors' omissions. Perhaps they hadn't anything to

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move. I hope you aren't going to keep this thing up all through the year."

"You needn't worry. I shan't touch your things again. I've just put you back where I found you. We're square now."

"I didn't ask you to do it," persisted Peck, ill-humoredly.

"I know you didn't, but I came to the conclusion that I oughtn't to have moved you in the beginning, so I tried to make it good. I'm sorry if you don't like it."

"Oh, I don't care," replied Peck, with indifference, going to transfer his clothes to the empty closet.

Archer strode over to Alumni to luncheon, disappointed in the outcome of his efforts to make amends for his act of thoughtlessness. He felt that he had come as near an apology as he could, without actually falling on his knees and demanding forgiveness with tears. If Peck was still sore, he might go hang! His favor wasn't worth having.

That evening Peck inquired what kind of a house it was that Archer's family had lived in

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for four generations, and for the first time in six weeks of co-residence, there occurred between them what might be called a conversation. But, as Sam gloomily remarked to himself afterward, it was like a talk over a wall.

CHAPTER V

SPORT FOR SPORT'S SAKE

THE football weeks were coming to an end. With the loss of eight strong players who had graduated the year before, or for other sufficient reasons had left school, and the lack of proper new material with which to work, the coach and school had been hard put to it to develop an eleven worthy of Seaton traditions. Sam played on the second eleven when he got the chance, and regularly did practice kicking to give exercise in catching punts to the backs on the first. He understood well, however, that he was not of the chosen, and cherished no illusions as to chance of promotion.

With the best of skill and labor a perfect finished product cannot be expected from poor materials. The school, whose pride had been exalted by the achievements of the Great Year just past, felt keenly the failure of the eleven

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to round into proper form. Weak spots, apparently incurable, developed in the line. The attack was frequently forceless and scattered, the defence slow, the whole game perfunctory and spiritless. Inferior elevens were allowed to score; teams which Hillbury had found easy, proved serious foes at Seaton. General sentiment grew pessimistic as the season advanced.

It was perhaps for this reason that the class games aroused so great an interest. The juniors got out their heavy men, inspired them with a spirit of dash and defiance, and beat the lower middlers. The seniors drafted four fellows from the school second eleven, filled up the number from the squad of brawny candidates, and went forth to bag the upper middlers. Varney, the captain of Archer's class team, took what he could get from the second eleven, — three, all told, — picked the best of the crowd of ambitious amateurs, and took up the gage of battle. Sam found himself, as the only man who could put the ball back straight, playing at centre, expected to change places with Bull Norris, the full-back, when there was occasion for kicking.

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The school team, with the faculty director of athletics, had gone to Cambridge for a game with the Harvard freshmen. Some of the teachers were out of town; others were busy with their own affairs. Not a soul of them was on the campus — a fact which was not at first observed. An umpire and a referee were chosen from the two lower classes. The referee, from the defeated lower middlers, showed himself a model of fairness; the umpire, a junior, favored the seniors, whom he considered the weaker team, hoping that they would survive the fray to meet his own class. The class supporters took their places decorously on the side benches, and cheered their representatives in due and seemly fashion. Archer kicked the ball to the seniors' ten-yard line, where Hoover took it and ran it back fifteen yards. At this point there was a wrangle over Fairmount's illegitimate blocking. The umpire affirmed at the outset that the performance was perfectly legal; but on being pressed, took safer ground for his decision by declaring that he didn't see the blocking at all. This aroused a new spirit. The upper middlers jeered at the

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umpire, the seniors jeered at the upper middlers. In the next scrimmage, Taylor, who was playing quarter, didn't receive the ball cleanly from his centre, and Archer, sprawling his full length through a narrow hole beside the guard's knees, got his hands on the ball and pulled it under his chin. The squirming layers were stripped off and Sam was adjudged the rightful holder. Then the upper middlers pushed Kendrick, their heavy half-back, through the line again and again, now behind big Ames, now behind Mulcahy, the other tackle, now through the centre, until a touch-down was achieved, and later a goal. This score temporarily soothed the inflammation caused by Fairmount's holding.

The seniors sent the ball down to Mudie, who fumbled it and was caught on the fifteen-yard line. Archer now gave up his place to Norris, who passed back for a kick. The ball came so high that Sam had to jump for it, but he managed to get his kick off before Putnam carried him down. The ball went out of bounds on the forty-yard line, where the seniors got it. They had no star like Kendrick, whose playing was

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surprisingly hard and fast, but they worked well together, and Taylor ran his game cleverly. Through guard and centre was no thoroughfare, but the upper middler ends were hugged and pulled out of the way, without protest from the short-sighted umpire, and the ball was shoved down upon the goal line by a series of successful flank movements, helped out by an occasional frontal attack on the tackles. So the score was made even by a senior touch-down and goal.

Meanwhile the audience was warming up. A detachment moved down from the benches to the side-lines, whither the balance of the interested sympathizers speedily followed. Regular cheering ceased. From either side now rose spontaneous yells of exultation or hoots of disapproval. The witty indulged in jocose personalities directed against players of the opposite camp. The two classes not concerned took sides, juniors with upper middlemen, lower middlemen with seniors. Archer kicked off again to the seniors' fifteen-yard line. Taylor tried a quarter-back run, and was nailed on the starting line and thrown back two yards. The seniors' kick

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was blocked by Ames, who struck down the arms of his opponent, and rushing through, took the rising punt on his chest. From Ames the ball bounded against the goal-post and rebounded among the pack. It was found, in time, under an upper middler's body. Wildes, the senior left end, declared that it had been stolen from him, but the referee would not allow the claim. Then Kendrick threw himself into several breaches, and plunged, wriggled, and crawled his way to a touch-down. Soon after this the half came to an end.

By this time it had become generally known that not a prof was on the field. A wild spirit possessed the crowd, a spirit of frolic and horse-play. Each party wanted victory, but it wanted fun also, and on the whole more. The ground was cleared for the second half by volunteer policemen, who made a great show of eagerness for order, and in fact led in the disorder. The crowd toed the side-lines when the seniors kicked off; when Kendrick got the ball and ran it back, the throng of upper middlers crossed the lines and swept in behind the wake of the play. Varney's men rushed the ball until they were blocked,

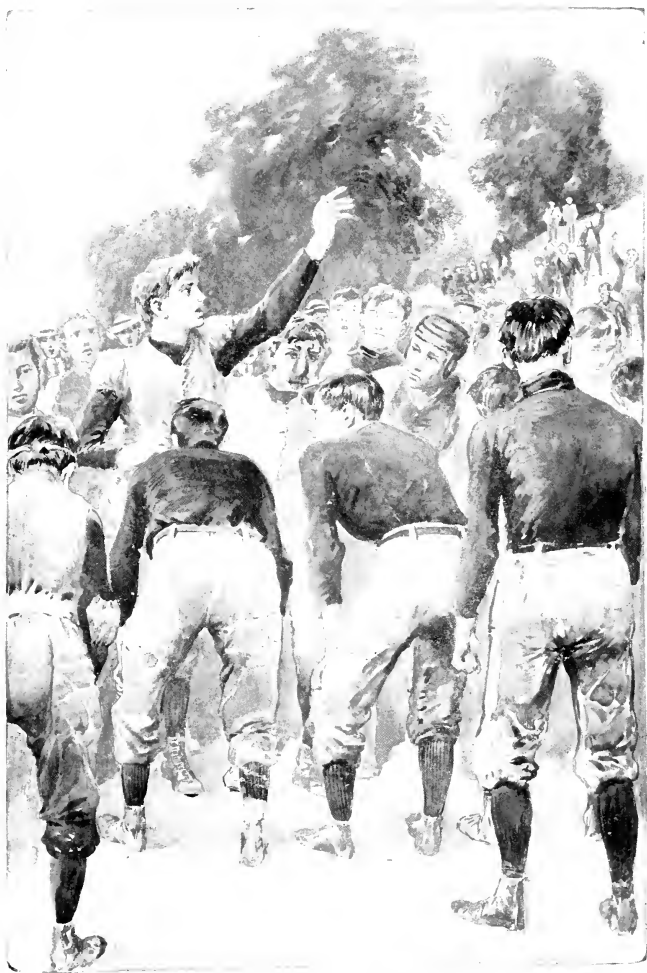
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when Archer kicked. Hoover took the ball safely for the seniors, and started his team on a return trip. Immediately another line of spectators crept up behind the ball, crowding in upon the game, cutting off the seniors' crack end runs and forcing the play directly through the line. Here the upper middlers held, and got the ball.

Yet, strange to say, though the upper middlers now found conditions exactly to their liking, the line plunges, which had been successful before, suddenly failed. Every attack that penetrated the line seemed to meet three men in the secondary defence. Big Ames glanced over the heads of his two opponents and yelled: "Referee! referee! they're playing thirteen men!"

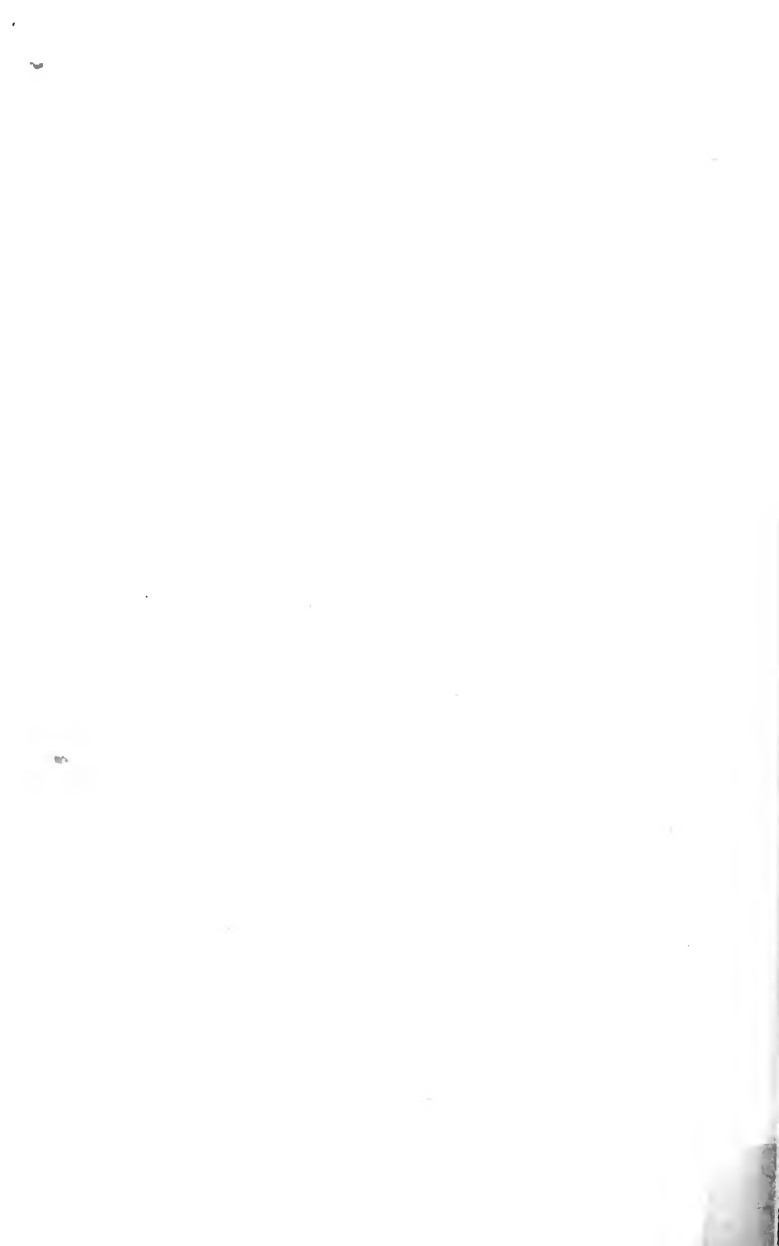
The line, and the crescent of supporters behind it, took up the cry. The crescent contracted, and meeting the line of seniors, enclosed the players and cut off escape. The two centres knelt at the ball, gazing at each other through sweat-dimmed eyes, while the officials counted. The senior uniforms numbered twelve!

Groans and taunts greeted this discovery.



"REFEREE! REFEREE! THEY'RE PLAYING THIRTEEN MEN!"

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The senior team was reduced to the normal number, elbow room was won by the use of elbows, and the play went on. Two tackles developed such a mutual interest that they disregarded the game altogether and devoted their energies during every scrimmage exclusively to each other. Each was goaded on by a troop of ardent backers. The ring of spectators narrowed and thickened and heaved and sputtered. Ambitious volunteers sprang in behind and lent a hand in pushing or in staying the enemy's charge. In the increasing confusion, a loud voice shouted "Game's over!" In a twinkling began a stampede for the possession of the ball, a confused running and pushing and swarming. The football bladder burst in the mêlée; all that the outnumbering upper middle class carried away was the collapsed cover of the much-tormented ball.

In spite of the assertion of spectators of all classes that the senior-upper middle class game had been the most enjoyable event of the school year, Sam was not wholly content to have his serious efforts turned into a joke. Duncan,

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who was manager of the senior team, likewise strongly disapproved of the course of things, and vowed that he should protest the game. Together they talked it over in the second spontaneous conversation of the year, in which Peck took great pains to deny that there had been any intention of putting twelve men into the field against eleven.

The next morning the whole school were treated to a chapel lecture on the extreme impropriety of their conduct on the field the day before, and to an exposition of the irreparable injury caused thereby to the dignity and fair fame of the institution. At the same time the game was declared null and void, and command was issued that it be replayed. The ruling as to the game the boys accepted as reasonable; the invective against their rowdyism served but to sweeten the recollection of an hour when they had actually enjoyed sport for sport's sake.

CHAPTER VI

A BONE OF CONTENTION

THE game was played again under prescribed conditions, and the upper middlers won once more, this time in consequence of practice gained in playing together, by good use of the forward pass, and through Kendrick's splendid plunges and fast runs. In fact, Kendrick was easily the hero of the game. Late in the season as it was, the coach took him immediately on to the school eleven as a substitute back, and as luck would have it, he got his S by slipping into the unfortunate Hillbury game at the very end. Of this we shall speak later or not at all. Sam Archer too, in much less conspicuous fashion, won credit in the class match, though the senior centre got under him several times and carried him off on his back. Big Ames of baseball fame played with his usual ungainly determination,

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and a fellow named Mulcahy was much in evidence during the game.

It was on the subject of this Mulcahy that Archer and Peck came to their first open disagreement. They naturally talked the game over that evening — Sam with frank elation, Peck in a spirit of good-natured forgiveness. When Mulcahy's name was mentioned, Peck's attitude changed instantly.

"He's a mucker!" he said, with contemptuous curtness.

"Why?" demanded Archer.

"Because he is," answered Peck. "Anybody with half an eye can see it. He held Wildes twice to-day."

Sam smiled wisely. "If everybody is a mucker who held in to-day's game, Mulcahy isn't the only fellow in the class. Putnam tripped Ames deliberately. I saw it myself."

"It was probably a knee tackle that slipped down."

"No, he stuck out his foot and Ames fell over it."

"Well, that's just because he doesn't know

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the game. No one who is acquainted with Harry Putnam would charge him with dirty play. If he did that, it was because he didn't know any better, or forgot himself."

"But if Mulcahy did the same thing, it proves he's a mucker!"

Sam was quite satisfied with this rejoinder. If Duncan Peck had any sense at all, he must recognize the absurdity of his prejudice. Sam, at the age of seventeen, with several generations of locally honored ancestors behind him, had become, since his arrival at Seaton, an ardent democrat. He believed firmly that a boy was as good as his mind and character made him, without regard to the clothes on his back or the money in his pocket or the social position of his nearest relatives. Rebelling instinctively at the pretensions of certain fellows whose fathers had "struck it rich," and whose money gave them a kind of importance, he was disposed to see in the poorer fellows who were carrying the burden of their future on their own unaided shoulders, examples of a sturdy, manly independence wholly admirable.

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"Whether he did the same thing or not," replied Peck, coolly, "Mulcahy is a mucker."

"The real difference is that Mulcahy works his way and Putnam doesn't," asserted Sam, warmly.

Duncan smiled scornfully. "The real difference is that Mulcahy works other people and Putnam doesn't!"

"Putnam doesn't have to," retorted Sam.

"Neither does Mulcahy."

"Why, he has to earn every cent he spends," returned Sam, eagerly. "It takes a lot more stuff in you to do that than to wear good clothes and keep your hands white on the money your father gives you. It's these fellows who earn their way who do things when they get into real work. They're used to hard knocks, and they go straight ahead when fellows like Putnam flat out. That's proved by the whole history of the Academy."

"What's proved by the whole history of the Academy?" asked Peck, with irritating calmness.

"Why, that fellows that earn their way make the most successful men."

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"I haven't said a word against fellows who earn their own way," retorted Peck, sharply. "They may make the most successful men and they may not. I don't care anything about that. But if you think that the history of the Academy proves that every scholarship fellow becomes a great and good man; you're sadly off. The scholarship fellows are of all kinds — good, bad, and indifferent. Some are nice fellows; some are dead beats, getting their board and clothes off the Academy because it's less work and more fun than it would be to milk cows or work in the shoe-shop; some seem to be training for crooks or anarchists. They work their way because they have to, that's all. You don't suppose they prefer it, do you?"

"Mulcahy plays football, and is on the 'Seatonian,' and does well in his studies, and he is a good speaker in the Laurel Leaf," remarked Archer, feeling suddenly his inexperience, and returning to the personal example when general assertion proved unsafe. "He amounts to more than Kendrick, and yet you don't make any objection to Kendrick."

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"Kendrick is a good fellow," said Duncan, enigmatically.

"But Mulcahy isn't!" completed Archer, with a sarcastic grin.

"No, Mulcahy isn't." Duncan's assertion was made in the nonchalant fashion which we use in stating generally accepted facts. A slight pause ensued, which he broke with a sudden accession of vehemence. "It's no use to argue about such fellows. Either you like 'em or you don't. It's a matter of taste, and the way you have of looking at fellows. We shan't agree, because we don't think alike. You have your kind and I have mine. You've a right to admire Mulcahy and his gang if you want to. I suppose you've got a right to bring him in here, too — as half the room is yours."

"I shall if I want to," answered Sam, with head high. "He's just as good as — as we are."

"That depends on the value you set on yourself," returned Duncan, coolly, taking his books into his bedroom with the air of one who wished to be alone.

Sam sat down at his desk, declaring scornful

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indifference to Duncan Peck and his snobbish notions, but his thought ran rather on the discussion just held than on the lesson before him. Notwithstanding his assertion to the contrary, he soon decided that he should not bring Mulcahy round. It wasn't the fair thing to impose an unwelcome guest upon his room-mate. At the same time he was clearly convinced that Peck's attitude was unworthy and contrary to the spirit and ideals of the school. If he must choose between Peck's favor and the friendship of deserving boys who were struggling to overcome the handicap of poverty and make something of themselves, he should not hesitate as to a choice. The steady fellows toiling along the path trodden by Webster and Lincoln were more honorable companions than the sleek, empty-headed brats of the newly rich!

This resolution to keep Mulcahy away from Hale out of consideration for Peck, Sam broke that very day — broke because he couldn't help himself. Mulcahy would come. To be sure, he had a reason for coming, — to discuss the election of the Laurel Leaf, of which literary

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society Archer had become a member; but he stayed longer than was necessary for this purpose and talked mainly about himself. Mulcahy was a striking figure in the school. Of good size, with well-poised head and bold, regular features lighted up by brilliant dark eyes, ready of speech and confident in manner, he gave the impression of one who had a distinguished future before him. He had not only the plausibility of a natural politician, but a certain insinuating way of taking another fellow into his confidence as if he alone appreciated the other's true value. Sam had been captivated by Mulcahy's winning attentions early in his school career; he believed in him and admired him.

Mulcahy was frankly ambitious. He was bound to lift himself. When he had finished school — he explained to Sam — he meant to study law and get into politics in some large city; he might go to college first if the way opened. He expected to have to work hard to accomplish these ambitions, especially as he believed in going in for the outside things as far as possible — the “Seatonian” and athletics and the literary societies.

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He tried to keep safely above the scholarship line, and he did well with the influential profs. He belonged to the Christian Fraternity, too; it helped you with the profs to belong to that.

"When you have to fight your own way in the world, you must take advantage of everything that comes along," he declared.

"It's a great thing to do that, to educate yourself," said Sam, enthusiastically. "It develops an ability that puts you ahead when you come to real work in the world."

Mulcahy looked at him sharply. "Yes, it sounds well, but it isn't all it's cracked up to be. If you tried it a month, you'd find out. Lots of fellows in this school look down on us scholarship fellows."

"Not those whose opinion is worth anything," answered Sam, promptly. "Not the best fellows, or the profs."

"The profs don't count," said Mulcahy, "and it's hard to tell who are the best fellows. There's your room-mate, Peck, for instance. He speaks to me on the street in a kind of condescending way, and he wouldn't be above taking a crib from

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me in recitation, but you don't suppose he'd invite me up here, do you?"

Sam blushed and twisted in his chair; he felt thoroughly ashamed of his room-mate, sufficiently ashamed to report with open indignation the discussion which had recently been held on this very subject. But an instinctive regard for honorable dealing, an instinct which Sam felt even when his faulty reason would have misled him, closed his lips. "I've heard him speak highly of Kendrick," he said, at length finding a clue. "He's a scholarship man."

"Kendrick!" ejaculated Mulcahy. "What's there to him? A common grind who's had the luck to be taken on the football squad!"

"Why, I thought he was a nice fellow," remarked Archer, puzzled at Mulcahy's vehemence. "What's the matter with him?"

"Oh, he's good enough as fellows go," replied Mulcahy, "but it's always seemed to me a green kind of goodness. He doesn't know any better."

"Know any better!" echoed Sam, still puzzled.

"I mean he isn't very keen," Mulcahy explained. "His wits are dull. You could take

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him in as easy as looking. He's an honest fool, and good-natured."

Sam did not answer. He was wondering why two fellows with the same hard problems of life to solve shouldn't sympathize with each other. Mulcahy rose to go.

"I'll count on you, then, in the election. Of course, I don't want the office, but we can't have those fellows running things to suit themselves all the time. It's contrary to the whole spirit of the place. I wish you'd see Lord and Kendrick and get them with us. They'd bring others."

"I'll do all I can," said Sam, cordially.

CHAPTER VII

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN

THE blow fell; Hillbury routed the Seaton eleven with ease. Sam had his mother and twelve-year-old sister down for the occasion. They came gay-trimmed and expectant, surveyed the room with critical but forgiving eyes, took luncheon at the Sedgwicks', saw the game, and departed by an evening train, witnessing with unsympathetic curiosity the noisy antics of the victors as they trooped to their special. Duncan happened in at 7 Hale while the visitors were there. He had the courtesy to hide any indifference which he may have felt to the Archer family. As a result, Mrs. Archer found him most agreeable, and she gave cordial expression to her opinion that Sam had been fortunate in his room-mate. Peck listened politely and made an acceptable response, but Sam, with a haste which surprised his dear mother, switched the conversation to another track.

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN

After his guests had departed Sam returned to his room and fell to brooding on the disappointments of life. Being new to the school and loyal, he was sensitive to the humiliation of the defeat by Hillbury; he likewise felt his loneliness in the big school in which he knew so many slightly and cared especially for no one who cared for him. His relations with Duncan kept him at a distance from Duncan's friends. In spite of his championship of Mulcahy he did not find that young man wholly satisfying as a companion. The temptation to find relief in wrong ways came up before him in a vaguely attractive form, not strong enough to upset his moral balance, but effectively adding to his sense of isolation. John Fish in the room below had planned to celebrate the victory. The victory failing, John had resigned himself to celebrating defeat. He did this by stealing out of town to a neighboring city, whence he would steal back in the early morning with gross boasts of his achievements ready for trustworthy ears. John Fish was one of those who never refuse themselves what they crave if gratification is possible. He was too

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coarse and too vulgar to exert a winning influence on Archer, but the thought of him to-night gave a pessimistic trend to our young man's philosophy. He looked abroad through blue spectacles upon a world of injustice in which the wicked triumphed. There was Birdie Fowle, who never did anything worse than make a noise or throw water out of a window, and yet was deep in Mr. Alsop's bad books; the wise ones declared that Birdie wouldn't last long in school. John Fish, meanwhile, went his quiet way unsuspected. Mr. Alsop always had a good word for him as an orderly and serious-minded youth; yet his sins compared to Fowle's were as boiler plate to blotting-paper.

Sam took up his French books to get ready for Monday's examination. Mr. Alsop was young and strenuous, a good teacher, but saturated with the conviction of his own importance, and ambitious for distinction as a driver. He boasted that he tolerated no sluggards in his courses; he prided himself on his keenness in detecting the goats before their whiskers had begun to appear. The result was that many slow-minded sheep got the credit of being goats, and many a

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN

wily old goat palmed himself off as an innocent lamb. Mr. Alsop meant well, but went wrong; and being wholly satisfied with the rectitude of his intentions, he was the last to discover the crookedness of his course. More than one unscrupulous idler, by pretending that he was struggling hard against natural inability, secured better marks than he deserved. Others — among them Sam — who said less and actually struggled more were predestined from the beginning to D's and E's. Sam felt that nothing short of a series of phenomenal examination books could propitiate fate. Convinced that the scales were weighted against him, he worked half-heartedly. It was with a sense of relief, after a quarter of an hour of unprofitable study on his French, that he hailed the interruption of Mulcahy.

“Plugging to-night?” asked the caller, in a tone of surprise, as he dropped indolently into a comfortable chair and hoisted his feet to the top of a table.

“It's got to be done,” replied Sam; “why not to-night?”

“Because on the night of a Hillbury game

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nobody expects to do anything. If we had won, you'd have been out all the evening celebrating."

"It was terrible, wasn't it!" mourned Sam, reminded anew of the school's affliction.

"They got it right in the neck," returned Mulcahy, cheerfully. "Defence, attack, kicking, running, forward passes, Hillbury put it all over 'em. They won't hold up their heads for a week. It's a very different thing being on an eleven that's had the stuffing beaten out of it, from playing a winner."

"You talk as if you were glad we got beaten," said Sam, gloomily.

"Oh, no, I'm just making the best of the case. There's no use in crying about it. You and I didn't lose the game, anyway. Those that lost will have to take the kicks now."

"I don't think they deserve kicks. They played as well as they knew how. Kendrick was a regular star. The way he stopped the rushes of that big red-headed Hillbury half-back was wonderful!"

"Yes, he did pretty well considering the short time he's been out," Mulcahy conceded. "But

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what good was it? They got licked to their knees, that's the essential fact."

"Who wrote that editorial in the 'Seatonian' special about the game?"

"I did," replied Mulcahy, complacently. "Wasn't it smooth?"

"Well, your statements don't hang together then. In that you said that while the result of the game was disappointing to Seaton, the main thing, after all, was that it was well played and fairly won; it was no disgrace to a team to be beaten in such a contest."

Mulcahy laughed heartily. "The 'Seatonian' was speaking then. The paper says what will sound well and suit the pros. The editors think what they please."

"Do you write all the good advice the 'Seatonian' gives us, about studying, and maintaining the reputation of the school, and acting up to the Seaton spirit?"

"We all take a turn at it. It's part of the business."

"Don't you believe in it?"

"Oh, sometimes; sometimes not. We don't

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have to." Mulcahy was growing tired of the subject. "What're you working on, French?"

"Yes, I've got an exam with Alsop Monday."

"It's an easy subject."

"Not for me, and not with Alsop."

"Oh, he isn't bad if you don't get him down on you. You want to go to see him and ask his opinion about things. Pretend to think a great deal of him, and let him give you information—he likes to do that—and confide in him some trouble or other—not a real one, you know, but something you've thought up. Get him going on the comparative merits of ancient and modern languages, if you can, and be convinced. He's 'most as easy that way as Rounder. You'll have to do some plugging too, of course."

"I'm willing to plug," said Archer, dubiously, "but I hate to talk with him."

"Too bad you don't have Rounder; he's the easiest thing there is," went on Mulcahy. "Last year Stevens and McCarthy were way down in his class; they hadn't either of 'em been doing a thing above E. Both of 'em went to Doc Rounder two weeks before the end of the term. Stevens

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said: 'Don't you think I've been improving lately, Doctor? I've been working terribly. It seems to me I ought to have a D anyway.' Doc Rounder looks at his book and says: 'Well, I don't know — have you been studying *very* hard?' 'Two hours every lesson,' says Stevens. 'Perhaps I can. We'll see,' says Doc. McCarthy was nervier. He said: 'Dr. Rounder, I think I ought to have a B this time. I've made a great improvement over last term.' Rounder looked in his book again and kind of hesitated; 'I'm afraid I can't do it, McCarthy, your marks are too low.' 'I ought to have B with the work I've put in it, — C at least,' McCarthy said, trying to look indignant. Rounder said he'd think it over. Stevens got D for a term mark, and McCarthy C — and neither of 'em deserved a thing above E."

"Had they been doing all that work?" asked Sam, innocently.

"Naw, they hadn't studied ten minutes a week."

"Then they lied."

Mulcahy laughed aloud. "Of course they lied. Who wouldn't to Rounder? Why, lying is the one thing you learn in his course."

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Archer pondered this statement in silence. Presently Mulcahy offered to help him with his French, and they employed themselves for a half-hour in looking up points on which Mr. Alsop was considered likely to test his class in the examination. After a time Mulcahy's zeal slackened. He tilted back in his chair, smoked a couple of cigarettes, and talked of the coming election in the Laurel Leaf.

"Scholarship men do smoke, then?" asked Sam, as the conversation lagged. He knew well that it was a strict rule that holders of scholarships should not smoke.

"We're not supposed to," answered Mulcahy, easily, "but you can't always do what you're supposed to."

"I should think they would smell it on your clothes."

"I'm pretty careful. Besides, you can always lay it off on to some one you've been with. My reputation would save me from suspicion anyway. I could bluff my way out of it."

"It doesn't seem quite square —"

"Oh, rot! What's a few cigarettes? It's

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just a question of getting ahead of the profs. The faculty is on one side and we're on the other. They try to make us do what they want, and we try to do what we please. They'll soak us if they can, and we beat 'em when we can. This isn't a Sunday-school; it's a little piece cut out of the world. If you're going to get on here, you've got to shake your kindergarten ideas, and play the game."

Mulcahy soon took himself away, and Sam went early to bed to sleep off his low spirits. On the next day he made an afternoon call at the Sedgwicks' and yielded readily to an invitation to supper. Miss Margaret was a mighty sorceress in dispelling the grumps. In the evening he attended the Christian Fraternity meeting, addressed by a distinguished professor of Yale. Mulcahy sat in a front row, and listened devoutly.

CHAPTER VIII

SLOW TO ANGER

REGULAR exercise in the gymnasium began immediately after the Hillbury game. In Sam's squad was a fellow from South Boston named Dennis Runyon. Runyon possessed a head ornamented with stiff, bristly hair on top, a stubby nose and pimply cheeks in front, and flaring clam-shell ears at the side. In the vacant spaces of his brain lurked, with other delusions of a large and general ignorance, a fixed idea that every man who was not positively effeminate admired a pugilist. Runyon's notions as to the meaning of education were hazy; he had come to Seaton with the somewhat vague hope of bettering his prospects in life, bearing a letter of introduction from a cousin who had worked his way through the school and was appreciative of the help which it had given him. This letter from a faithful alumnus procured Runyon's admittance. Entering a lower class in

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which the work was, for him, largely review, he gained rank high enough to receive a provisional scholarship.

But Dennis Runyon's ambitions were not limited to gaining a foothold on the toilsome, uphill road which the self-made man must travel; he thirsted for distinction, especially distinction in athletics. The school football team did not desire his services; his class captain gave him a trial, and quickly dropped him for a smaller man who used his head more and his fists less. The football season passed, the uneventful winter months were at hand, his lesson marks were tending steadily downward. The name of Runyon was still obscure in Seaton.

Dennis went home for Thanksgiving, and offered what excuses he could for his failure to make the expected reputation.

"Don't you know any fellows at all?" demanded Pete Runyon, an older brother, who had brought some glory upon the family by winning public matches at various boxing clubs.

"Not many," replied Dennis, candidly. "They don't take much notice of a new fellow."

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"Why don't ye get up a fight, then? That'll show 'em what kind of a man ye are."

"I haven't got any reason for fighting."

"Find one, make one! Pick out one of these fellows who's stuck on himself and give him a little jaw. He'll fight when he gets mad enough. Then give him a good upper cut and finish him off easy. They'll have some respect for you then. Ain't ye man enough for that?"

"I dunno."

"Ye ought to be, then. What've I learned ye to use yer paddies for? See what it's done fer me! When I go down the street, the' ain't a man in the ward that don't jump to give me the glad hand. It's so everywhere. Everybody likes a man that can fight. The boys 'll talk about ye all over the school. Ye'll be somebody then!"

Dennis returned to school with his brother's counsel ringing in his ears. He experimented at first with boasts, and anecdotes of hard bouts. The bystanders listened with grins and suggested that he try his skill on Legge. Legge was a heavy-weight football player, old and hard, with the torso of a Roman Hercules, and arms ridged with

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iron sinews. As Runyon was a light middleweight, this suggestion could only spring from gross ignorance of the rules of the ring, or be prompted by a spirit of ridicule. When flippant small boys of his class, whose weakness was their protection, fell to asking him, with mock solemnity, for details of these encounters, he became gradually aware that he was being chaffed. Something must be done to impress the contemptuous with his worth.

Exactly why he chose Sam Archer as the person on whom to try the value of his brother's advice is not easy to determine. Jealousy doubtless entered into the case, a little personal spite, and much of the cunning of the professional sport. Sam's democratic principles were not quite broad enough to include a friendship with Runyon. Sam had made a class football team when Runyon had not. Sam was tall and therefore looked big, yet being thin was presumably weak — a combination much to be desired in the person to be used by Runyon for demonstration of his prowess. He was, moreover, an independent. Not being a member of any close organization, he was not always surrounded by friends who felt themselves

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privileged to interfere in his affairs; and though not a fraternity man or a great athlete, he was not so obscure that a victory over him would be inglorious.

Having selected his victim, Runyon's only problem was to make him fight. It happened soon that chance threw a pretext directly in his way, though he was not quick enough to recognize it. Archer, in the hurried crowding to put away dumbbells after the exercise, stepped on Runyon's heel and pulled his gymnasium slipper loose. Runyon turned with a scowl, but before his mind awoke to the opportunity Archer had begged his pardon and passed on. The next day Runyon deliberately trod on Archer's heel, and did not apologize. The result, however, was disappointing; Sam adjusted his shoe and went his way without bestowing a look on the offender.

The boxer now had recourse to more aggressive measures. He pushed young Hartley into Archer on the gymnasium floor, but it was Hartley who turned on him with abuse — and Hartley was too small to notice. He commented with audible contempt on Sam's performance on the vaulting

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horse. As he passed Taylor and Archer talking together at the head of the gymnasium stairs, he mocked the phrase which had just fallen from Sam's lips, and lingered near by to see if his challenge would be taken up.

"What's that fellow driving at?" demanded Taylor. "Is he trying to get up a scrap with you?"

"It looks like it," replied Sam. "Perhaps it's just his way of being funny."

"He's getting too fresh. He ought to be squelched!"

"I don't want to be the one to do it. You don't gain anything by scrapping with fellows like him."

Sam's evident unwillingness to be drawn was just the incentive needed to urge his assailant on. Runyon was one who could be bluffed or cowed, but not placated. Sam was by nature good-humored and patient, capable of holding out on a fixed course to the last gasp, but neither resentful nor pugnacious. When Collins informed Bruce that Archer was good material, but must get speed and fight into him before he could accomplish

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anything, the coach showed himself a shrewd judge of character, as well as an expert in the psychology of successful racers. As Archer sought to avoid him, Runyon's conduct grew more offensive. Both were criticised severely by spectators of the performance, the one for not standing up for his rights, the other for acting like a hoodlum.

The crisis came one day early in December, when Runyon, having flung out an unsuccessful gibe in the dressing room, overtook Archer on the stairs and jostled roughly against him. Sam, at last exasperated, gave the bully a push with his shoulder that sent the intrepid challenger hard against the side wall. Runyon rebounded, and striking Archer a blow in the upper arm, squared himself for battle.

"Come on, if you want to fight!" he called derisively. "I didn't believe you had sand enough."

"I won't fight here," answered Archer.

"Ye won't fight anywhere, I guess. You're too much of a coward!"

By this time boys were gathering above and

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below, and staring at the brawlers with eager, grinning faces.

"Don't stand his lip, Sam," said Kendrick, pushing his way up the steps. "Knock the face off him!"

Runyon turned sharply toward the intruder. Whatever his intention, he suppressed it as soon as he recognized the stalwart football player. "He'll knock the face off me, nit!" said the pugilist. "He won't even give me a chance to get at him. Shorty Hartley's about his class."

The gong for the beginning of exercise sounded.

"I'll give you a chance this afternoon," said Sam, hastily.

"Yes, you will!" sneered Runyon, "probably when you have a crowd of friends to butt in."

"When we can have it out alone," declared Sam, with a hard look in his eyes and an air of extreme dignity. "I'll send a second to you this noon."

CHAPTER IX

THE FURY OF A PATIENT MAN

THE more Archer considered the matter, the more disgusted he became. It was totally unreasonable and absurd. Runyon had apparently set his heart on forcing a fight — why, Runyon alone knew. Sam felt himself the victim of an inexplicable persecution. He couldn't hand the persecutor over to friends to chastise, he couldn't complain to the faculty, he couldn't put up forever with insults and humiliations. He simply must fight — unless Mulcahy's sharp wits could devise a way of silencing the rowdy.

Sam found Mulcahy before luncheon, and appealed for help.

"What did you get into such a scrape for?" demanded Mulcahy, with small show of sympathy.

"It wasn't my fault; he forced me into it."

"You must have done something to him. He wouldn't pick on you without some kind of reason."

"Not a thing. I don't think I'd ever spoken

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to him. He's making a fool of himself and me too. Can't you go to him and show him how idiotic it is, and get him to shut up? If you don't succeed in that, tell him I'm ready to fight."

Mulcahy drew away. "I couldn't do that, really. It wouldn't do for me to interfere. I'd like to help you, of course, but I couldn't get mixed up in a thing of that kind."

"Why not?" asked Archer, perplexed at his friend's coldness.

"Well, it would be talked about; some of the faculty would hear of it, and they might not understand my position in it. I couldn't have them think I was acting as second in a school prize-fight. Then my position on the 'Seatonian' has to be considered."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," said Archer, gloomily. "I've got into trouble with a cheap mutt, from no fault of mine. I've got to have some one to help me."

"I'll help you by giving you the best advice I know. Go to Runyon quietly and fix it up."

"Fix it up!" echoed Archer. "How can I fix it up?"

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“Why, tell him you acted thoughtlessly, and are sorry you pushed him. Beg his pardon, and when the thing is over and settled, avoid him. If you don’t patch it up, you’ll be walloped by a good fighter, and very likely get kicked out of school into the bargain.”

Sam stared — glared — at his counsellor. “Go down on my knees to that fellow!” he said, with vibrant voice and flashing eyes. “Swallow all the insults he’s given me and ask for more, beg his pardon for not taking his dirty kicks with gratitude! I wouldn’t do that for a dozen ‘Seatonians’ and a hundred faculties. I wouldn’t do that for any one, not if I knew I was going to be fired the next minute!”

“Don’t blame me, then, if things don’t go right,” returned Mulcahy, seating himself at his desk as if the interview were over. “You’ll just get into the scrape deeper. I’ve given you the best advice I know. My conscience is clear.”

Sam flung out of Mulcahy’s room without a backward glance or a word. Furious with Mulcahy and with the whole ridiculous business, he strode along vowing he would fight without a

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second, anywhere, at any time. At the corner of Sibley he ran into Kendrick.

"Look out there!" sang out Kendrick's cheerful voice. "What're you rushing me for? I'm not Runyon."

Sam's face brightened. "Say, Ken, will you be my second if I have to fight that fellow?"

"Sure, I will," responded the ready Kendrick. "But why do you say 'if'? You've *got* to fight him."

"Don't you think you might go to him and show him what a fool he's making —"

"It wouldn't do a bit of good," interrupted Kendrick. "Nothing 'll cure his disease but some good hard punches in the head. I'd just as lief go and tell him what a fool he is as not. Maybe I'd get a chance to hand him a few myself. Only it wouldn't do any good."

"You won't get into any trouble with the pros by backing me, will you?" questioned Sam, mindful of Mulcahy's fears.

"Trouble? Supposing I do? The job's got to be done, hasn't it?"

"Then go and tell him to come to my room

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after the four o'clock bell rings. Alsop is at recitation then. He can bring some one with him."

"All right," replied Kendrick, cordially. "Trust the thing to me. I'll arrange everything in proper style, giving him a little of my opinion at the same time. Four o'clock this afternoon at 7 Hale!"

Mr. Alsop took his books and his dignity over to recitation that afternoon, little suspecting the plot against the boasted quiet of his entry. Kendrick had cleared the centre of the room of movables, and now sat on the sofa, nursing his knee and giving final words of counsel. Sam had put on tennis shoes, an old pair of trousers and a jersey, and over this had thrown his coat.

"Don't accept any rules at all," advised Kendrick. "Just wade in and hit him any old way. You aren't fighting for a diamond belt, you're just defending yourself against bullying; close in on him or throw him; then pummel him. If you stand off, he'll whack you. You want to rush him."

"It's the craziest fool thing I ever got into," groaned Sam. "There's no sense in it at all. I never did anything to the mucker."

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“What’s the good of going over that again! When a rowdy sets on you in the street, you’ve got either to fight or to run. It’s no use to tell him he isn’t acting like a gentleman. If Runyon insists on fighting, you’ve got to fight him, or get some one else to do it for you, or appeal to the faculty for protection.”

“I know it!” growled Sam, whose temper was growing vicious. “I’m going to fight.”

“You’re going to win, too,” observed Kendrick, with a sage nod, falling in naturally with the orthodox practice of encouragement pursued by seconds since the days of Homer. “He’s nothing.”

A bold knock at the door announced the coming of the enemy. Runyon walked in, followed by Brantwein, his supporter. Brantwein was a radical, avowing and defending extreme socialist ideas. He was beating his way through the school. He sold peanuts to the fellows on the bleachers at the ball games, devised various means, effective and ineffective, of getting marks without excessive work, put the shot with considerable success, and protested generally that his name did

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not mean "brandy," because it was not spelled with a double *n*. None the less he was dubbed "Brandy" from the day of his advent. He was generally against the government, and he liked a scrap.

Runyon took off his coat immediately. "We'll follow the Marquis of Queensberry rules," he proclaimed. "No hitting below the belt and no clinching."

"Rules nothing!" answered Kendrick, curtly.

"What's all this for, anyway?" said Archer. "I've nothing against you to fight over."

"I've got something against you," returned Runyon, "and you ain't goin' to crawl out of it now!"

At this taunt a white spot appeared on each of Sam's cheekbones, and an ominous light flashed into his eyes. He drew off his coat — slowly, because he wanted time to consider his opening. Runyon caught the change of color in his opponent's face, and misinterpreted its meaning. Fearing that the long-suffering Archer might be still reluctant to use his fists, and that the *éclat* which he had striven for might at the last moment

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escape him, he stepped forward and swung the flat of his hand in a stinging slap against Sam's cheek.

The effect far exceeded Runyon's expectations. Sam's long-suppressed anger at being forced into a ridiculous position flared into scorching fury. With every nerve alert and every muscle quivering, he flung the coat aside and leaped forward. He came too quick and too hard for his enemy's artistic defence. The blow that should have felled him to the floor, wildly and feebly aimed, glanced harmless from his lowered, plunging head. The next instant, Sam's arms were encircling Runyon's waist, his head was planted safely against his opponent's chest; the on-rush of his dive swept the boxer, drumming vainly on the muscle-armored shoulders, back against the wall. They struck the doorpost with a force that slammed Runyon's head against the wood. Before he could recover, Archer caught his footing, and whirling his confused assailant about, threw him to the floor and fell heavily upon him.

What followed was totally contrary to the conduct expected of a well-mannered hero of a boy's

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book. Never was mighty fighter so soon despoiled of his martial ardor, or so quickly brought to piteous appeal for mercy. The seconds together dragged the infuriated tiger from his prey. And while Kendrick in the corner of the study was bringing Archer back to his normal state of charity and patience, Brantwein was swabbing Runyon's swelling, red-smeared face in the bedroom, and muttering a combination of consolations and invectives.

"He didn't fight fair!" sputtered Runyon, when his breath returned and his throat was clear.

"Oh, shut up!" retorted the socialist. "You got what was coming to you."

"Didn't I tell you the way to fix him!" boasted Kendrick, when the door closed behind the battered, cowed Runyon and his disappointed second. "If you had fought according to ring rules, he'd have knocked you all over the place."

"Supposing he had done it, what then?" asked Sam, looking ruefully at his knuckles.

"Then I should have insulted him," answered Kendrick, promptly, "and if he did for me, some

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one else would have come up. He'd never have got through the year without a good whaling."

Runyon went home the next day for comfort and repairs. And when he was repaired and comforted, not daring or not caring to face the jeers of his schoolmates, he decided not to return to the scene of his defeat, but to work in a department store instead. Some time after his disappearance, some innocent asked a friendly instructor whether Runyon was expelled on account of his fight with Archer, and thus put the keen noses of the faculty on the scent. So, long after the school had ceased to talk of it, the history of the Battle of 7 Hale was revealed to the authorities.

CHAPTER X

DUNCAN'S DISGUST

DESPITE his fears, Sam never heard from the faculty with reference to his duel. He had, on the whole, proved to his teachers his right to be considered a law-abiding citizen, if not a distinguished scholar; and the accepted student version of the affair showed him anything but an aggressor. Mr. Alsop, while consenting to the verdict of acquittal, adhered in silence to his own opinion, which held Sam accountable for the desecration of the well by a low fight.

This, however, was a month after the event. Mulcahy had come over on the very evening to offer congratulations.

"You were lucky to get out of it so easily," he said. "The fact is that I thought Runyon would be too much for you, so the best thing was to switch him off. I didn't like the idea of your

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being mauled about by a rough bully like him. That's why I tried to keep you back."

"But I simply couldn't put up any longer with the treatment he was giving me," protested Sam. "That was worse than fighting and getting licked. I hadn't any self-respect left."

"I hoped you would be able to patch it up. I see now that I was wrong, but I was terribly afraid he'd do you some injury."

Sam uttered a low laugh — quite the good-natured victor. "Well, he didn't. My knuckles are the only sore spot on me."

"It's a good thing you got Kendrick into it with you. He'll be more likely to come over to our side on the Laurel Leaf matter. Have you talked with him yet?"

Sam shook his head.

"Be as careful with him as you can. Make him see that we want to get the offices out of the hands of the oligarchy, back into the school. It's a shame that a democratic institution like the Academy should be bossed by the few fellows in the fraternities."

"Isn't it chiefly because the frats have got some

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of the best fellows in them?" asked Sam, innocently.

"No! They have some good fellows and a lot who wouldn't be anything if they didn't have money behind them. They put a frat man forward, and the rank and file just sit still and vote him in."

"The rank and file don't care much about it anyway."

"They ought to, and they will when they're aroused. It's up to us to show them how to protect their rights."

After Mulcahy went, Sam compared the statement which his guest had just made about the duel, with the reasons which he had given the day before when he refused to act as second. "He was really afraid to have anything to do with it," he mused. "I don't believe those fellows he's so down on would have gone back on a friend in that way. Still, I ought not to blame him for that; he has his way to make; he can't afford to get into trouble with the profs." The contrasting conduct of Kendrick, who also had his way to make, occurred to him, and shook

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his faith in his own argument. "But Ken is a natural scrapper," he reassured himself. "Ken would do 'most anything to see a fight."

One thing, however, Ken would not do — vote for Mulcahy for office. That Archer discovered as soon as he broached the subject.

"I wouldn't vote for him for street sweeper!" he declared. "Mulcahy's a pig, and a grafter. He's all for Mulcahy, and for nobody and nothing else. If he wants a thing, on general principles I don't want it. If he says a course is right, I'm sure it isn't. He works everything and everybody he can get hold of. He's got the faculty hypnotized into believing he's an angel. I wouldn't trust him around the corner."

"He's a mighty able fellow," replied Archer, who charged Kendrick's vehemence up against prejudice and envy; "a lot abler than Metcalf, or Dupont, or —"

"Or me —" put in Kendrick, fervid, but ungrammatical. "He's all that — everything but straight."

"I've never seen anything crooked about him," Sam persisted. "He's been a very good friend

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to me. I should think as you're both in the same boat, you'd sympathize with him."

"How are we both in the same boat?"

"Why, you both have to rely on yourselves for what you get. You are both scholarship men."

Kendrick looked relieved. "Is that all you meant! I was afraid you thought we were in some way alike. If that was so, I was going to change right off so as to be different. Mulcahy's a crook!"

"He's a friend of mine, if you please," said Sam, with dignity.

"What has he ever done for you, anything?"

"Yes, he's helped me with lessons and given me advice."

"Advice is cheap. You can get it by the hour down in Alsop's room. If he's given you free tutoring, that's something."

"It hasn't been very much," confessed Sam. "I didn't need it."

"He wasn't much use to you in your row with Runyon, was he? If you'd followed his advice then, you'd have been to the bad altogether."

"He meant well; he was afraid I'd get hurt,"

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announced Sam; and then, to cut short this discussion of Mulcahy's virtues, he asked, "Then you won't vote for him?"

"Vote for him? Never. I'd rather vote for myself! I'm more or less of a fool, but I have a little principle, and there are some things I'm too good or too proud to do. There's nothing Mulcahy wouldn't do, if he could make anything by it, and was sure nobody saw him. Don't be surprised if you find me electioneering against him."

Sam went back to his room disgusted. The causes of his disgust were so complex, that he couldn't possibly disentangle them. He imagined the chief one to be his failure to accomplish his object with Kendrick, and the latter's colossal prejudice against Mulcahy. In fact, he was beginning to feel the difficulty of defending his friend from insinuations against him, and to be annoyed that it was necessary to do so. He found Peck standing before the grate with hands clasped behind him, and a black frown on his face.

"I hear you've been turning this place into a prize ring," began Duncan. "Hereafter when

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you have these little affairs with your friends I wish you'd hold 'em somewhere else."

"I shan't have any more. I didn't want this one. I tried as hard as I could to keep out of it."

"You didn't have to hold it here, did you?"

"Perhaps not. I didn't know where else to go. I thought you wouldn't be here."

"I wish I had been. I'd have stopped it mighty quick. Runyon and Brandy Brantwein and Mulcahy and you! That combination would ruin any room's reputation!"

"Mulcahy wasn't here!" said Sam, sullenly.

"Who was it, then?"

"Kendrick."

Duncan stared. "I wonder how he got into it," he said at length.

"He knew I was forced into the thing and he wanted to help me out," answered Sam, quickly. "That's more than some fellows I know would do," he added with scornful emphasis.

Duncan's stern look melted into a malicious grin. "More than Mulcahy would do, I'll bet. He isn't running any more risks than he can help."

"There wasn't any risk!" said Sam, bravely:

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"There wasn't? Why, you'll every one of you be fired when the faculty gets on to it."

"I guess not," Sam remarked with a confidence which was not altogether sincere.

"That Mulcahy has the crust of a crocodile," went on Peck. "I understand he's trying to elect himself president of the Leaf."

"Look here, Peck," said Sam, holding his head high, "I wish you'd leave Mulcahy out of the conversation hereafter. He's a friend of mine, and I don't care to hear him abused all the time. If you don't want to vote for him, you're not obliged to. There'll be other candidates. He has brains and ability, but perhaps they don't count as much in your eyes as clothes and a big allowance and membership in a frat."

"That isn't so," snapped Duncan. "I don't care anything about money, but I hate a mucker whether he's rich or poor."

"Mulcahy isn't a mucker. My opinion on that point is worth more than yours, for I know him better than you do. He's going home with me over next Sunday. That shows what I think of him."

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Archer spoke with six feet of dignity and the gravity of a judge handing down a decision, but Peck was totally unimpressed. "I hope he won't steal the silver," he said with an exasperating twinkle, — "the old silver!"

Sam blushed, and cursed himself that he had ever been fool enough to tell Peck anything. And while he blushed and sought vainly for a crushing reply, Peck went whistling off to his bedroom, disposed to think rather better of his room-mate after all. If you believe in your friends, it's your business to stand up for them — until you find them out.

CHAPTER XI

A REVELATION OF CHARACTER

THERE was no danger of lack of quorum at the election of the Laurel Leaf. Every faithful wheelhorse, every indifferent who had joined "to please the folks at home," every intermittently interested member hastened to the society rooms with ballot in his hand and zeal in his heart. The tide set hard against the champion of democracy. Underwood was elected by a vote representing two-thirds of the society.

Greatly chagrined and deeply sympathizing with his defeated friend, Sam took Mulcahy home to 7 Hale to console him. Peck, who happened to be in, greeted them coldly, and withdrew in such marked haste that Sam, fearful lest Mulcahy should resent the intended slight, hastily pushed his best chair forward and invited his guest cordially to sit down. Mulcahy, however, showed himself in no wise sensitive. He settled into the

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comfortable chair and composedly lit a cigarette, less like a young reformer who had suffered a great disappointment, than a shrewd old philosopher to whom a single defeat was but one of the little annoyances of life, to be smiled over and forgotten.

"When are you going to begin to smoke?" he asked, as Sam drew his chair to the fireplace beside him.

"Not for a long time," answered Sam, "perhaps never."

"Why not?"

"My family don't want me to, for one thing. Then I want to keep myself in good condition."

"Most fellows wouldn't care much for either of those reasons," said Mulcahy. "You're expected to do what the rest do."

Sam did not reply to this; he was thinking how hard it often was to resist doing the things which the rest did.

"People at home don't know anything about what is necessary in a school like this," continued Mulcahy. "If you want to get on, you mustn't go against the crowd."

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"I don't care anything about getting on," said Sam. "I'm not ambitious."

"You'd like to be popular, wouldn't you?"

"No!" Sam answered decidedly. "I shouldn't want to be disliked, but holding office and that kind of thing doesn't interest me. There's too much hard feeling and disappointment."

Mulcahy laughed. "You don't know anything about it. Now, I got beaten to-night. Do you suppose I'm discouraged? Not a bit. I'll lie low for a while and work my game and wait. By and by things will come my way. If you just hang on to a thing long enough, don't make mistakes and don't get mad, you wear away the opposition after a time. There's another election this year, and there's another year after this. I'll be president of the Laurel Leaf before I leave this place. See if I don't."

Again a silence. Sam believed in Mulcahy's prophecy, but the tone of it grated on him.

It was not Mulcahy's habit to take people into his confidence. But to-night, as he lolled in Archer's comfortable easy-chair, flattered by the attentions and admiration of this boy of superior

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strain, he relaxed his caution and gave a glimpse of his real self.

"Do you know what I do summers?" he asked.

"Work, don't you?"

"At what?"

Sam shook his head. "You've never told me."

"I sell books. I can go into a factory — when they'll let me in — and sell books right through from floor to floor, to men and women both. I've sold books bound in morocco for six dollars to women who didn't earn that a week. I used to be so successful that when I came to deliver the books, they'd pretend I'd used unfair means to get their signatures. Yet it was all done by holding on and not taking offence, and flattering and agreeing with people."

"I don't think much of getting poor women to pay a week's wages for a book when they need every cent they can earn for food and clothes," said Sam, bluntly.

"Oh, perhaps they earned more than six dollars. It don't matter. They're bound to throw away about so much anyway."

"How old are you?" asked Sam.

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"I'll be twenty-one next July."

"You're only three years older than I am, but I couldn't do that kind of thing if I were fifty." Sam did not say exactly what he meant, which was that he couldn't do that kind of thing under any circumstances.

"I just mentioned it to show what hanging on will do. I don't really care anything about this Laurel Leaf office except as a help to something else."

"What is that?"

Mulcahy looked at his host doubtfully under the rising twists of smoke. "You won't speak of it to any one?"

"Certainly not, if you don't want me to."

"You know what the Yale Cup is?" he asked.

"Never heard of it."

"The Yale Club of Boston gives a cup every year in three or four big schools to the senior who 'combines the greatest excellence in athletics with good standing in his studies.' That's the way it reads in the catalogue. It's awarded at Commencement, with a whole batch of other prizes. In June of our senior year I want that

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cup. The greatest difficulty is about the athletics. I'm going to try hard for the football team next fall, and I'll do something with the pole vault this year. With the 'Seatonian' and the presidency of the Laurel Leaf, and good rank in studies, and the favor of several influential profs, which I'm working for, I ought to have a good show."

"Do you apply for it?" asked simple Sam.

"No, foolish! The faculty picks out the man."

Mulcahy threw the stub of his fourth cigarette into the fireplace and lighted another. "That's a prize worth having," he went on, "for it means that the winner is a superior, all-round man. I'm going in for the Merrill compositions too, and perhaps for the speaking. They're cash prizes, you know; but as honors they aren't in it with the Yale Cup."

"Did Owen get it last year?"

"No, he wasn't a good enough scholar. He did well enough in athletics, but he was only about a C man in his studies."

"That would be a perfectly bully thing to take home with you, wouldn't it?" broke forth Sam,

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in honest enthusiasm. "Your father and mother would be tickled to death with the scholarship part of it, and the honor of the athletics would make you feel like a prince. I'd rather get a thing like that than have an auto of my own."

Mulcahy smiled complacently. "I really don't care much about athletics. I only go in for them because it's at present the thing to do."

A light step was heard in the entry, followed immediately by a knock at the door. Mulcahy put his cigarette on the edge of the table, and shoved his chair away; Sam turned his half round. "Come in!" he cried.

The door opened to admit Mr. Alsop. "Good evening," he began, as both students rose, and Mulcahy retreated still farther from the table. "I came to inquire the result of your election."

"I was badly beaten," said Mulcahy, with charming frankness. "They wouldn't have me. Underwood was the honored man."

"I'm glad to see that you take it so well," said Mr. Alsop. "That's the spirit I like in school politics." He stopped short, suddenly aware of the thick atmosphere of smoke and the pungent,

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penetrating odor of cigarettes. "Why, Archer!" he exclaimed, turning sternly on Sam, "you told me the other day that you did not smoke at all!"

Sam flushed to the roots of his hair; his look glanced from the reproving countenance of the teacher to the calm face of Mulcahy. He did not answer.

"He doesn't smoke much, I can assure you," Mulcahy broke in quickly. "I think he was tempted to try a cigarette to-night to comfort himself over our defeat."

Mr. Alsop sniffed the air. "There's more than one cigarette in the atmosphere of this room."

Sam raised his eyes sullenly to the teacher's, shot a swift, significant glance at Mulcahy, and looked out across the table at the red banner upon the wall. He said nothing, for there was nothing that he could say.

"There's a great difference between not smoking at all and smoking a little," the teacher continued in a severe lecture tone. "As I have explained, we do not forbid smoking, except to scholarship men; we try to discourage it all we can, because we consider it harmful. You told

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me that you did not smoke. I find you smoking. You have not been honest with me."

Mr. Alsop paused to give Archer an opportunity to reply. Sam racked his brain for some non-committal form of words, and found none. "Yes, sir," he said desperately.

"He probably thought, sir, that he smoked so little that it was practically none at all," interposed Mulcahy. "I've never seen him smoking before to-night."

"He should have said so, then," declared Mr. Alsop, addressing Mulcahy. "My question was a friendly one and should have been frankly answered." He faced the culprit again, who, with angry red cheeks and hostile, defiant eyes, now looked squarely at him. "I want to be helpful to you, Archer, but I can't be that unless you trust me. If you had been honest with me, I shouldn't have said anything different to you then from what I am saying now, but it would have been pleasanter for you to hear. Any smoking at all is bad for a boy of your age. The habit will grow on you, if once you get it, in spite of you. It will interfere with your physical and mental growth,

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and unfit you to do your best in studies or in athletics."

"Yes, sir," said Sam, whose indignation over the unfair treatment which he was enduring did not prevent his recognizing the truth of the instructor's words.

"Good night !"

With this abrupt salutation, Mr. Alsop went his way downstairs, wholly satisfied with his own conduct, but confessing serious disappointment with certain of the boys under his care. If only Archer were as straightforward, and Fowle as orderly, as John Fish, the well would be less a source of uneasiness to him and less damaging to his pride. Archer evidently needed watching; and Fowle — well, Fowle would certainly have to go before the end of another term. That boy's perpetual disregard of rules and apparent contempt for authority were unendurable !

CHAPTER XII

MR. ALSOP'S DIGNITY

"I'm awfully sorry!" began Mulcahy, vehemently, as soon as the door had closed behind the departing form of Mr. Alsop. "I'm awfully sorry, but I couldn't help it. There wasn't any other way out."

"I suppose not," answered Archer, with sullen sarcasm.

Mulcahy came round the table and put his hand on Archer's shoulder. Sam threw it off and edged away.

"Just try to think of it from my side," urged Mulcahy. "Here I was, caught in the act. If Alsop had wanted to make a row about it, I might have lost my scholarship. They'd all have been down on me, anyway, and it would have been terribly hard to get them over to my side again; while as for you —" He hesitated at this point,

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not sure how to put his idea into unobjectionable form.

“While as for me,” flamed Archer, “all I get is to have Alsop tell all the rest that I’m a liar and going to the bad as fast as I can. That’s nothing at all!”

“You’re crazy!” answered Mulcahy, smiling compassionately at his companion’s vehemence. “Nothing like that will happen. You’ve a right to smoke if you want to. Alsop understands that. I smoothed out all the difficulty about your telling him that you didn’t. You won’t hear from it again. Alsop won’t think any differently of you from what he always has.”

“No different, but more so,” interjected Sam, bitterly.

“While as for me, why, my whole life plans might be spoiled.”

“*My* life plans don’t make any difference, do they?”

“You haven’t any. You don’t need to have any. A fellow in your position, with all the bills paid for you, and everything provided for years to come, doesn’t know what it is to have to struggle along

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with your head just above water, always afraid a big wave will roll up and swamp you."

"Why didn't you think of that when you lighted the cigarettes?" demanded Sam, roughly. "What business have you to smoke at all? You know the rules."

"The rules are silly for a man of my age," returned Mulcahy. "If I'd known Alsop was going to butt in, of course I wouldn't have done it."

"It's done now, anyway," sighed Archer, looking at his watch. "I don't know about you, but I've got to do some studying to-night. I can't let Alsop flunk me to-morrow, after this."

"I'm going," said the visitor. He held out his hand with his best, most flattering smile. "Good-by, Sammy. You showed yourself the right sort of a friend to-night. I shan't forget it."

"Nor I," thought Sam, as he gave back a feeble pressure and muttered a return good-night.

When Mulcahy was gone, Sam sat down by the lamp with his books spread out before him. For a long time, however, he let his eyes stray past them to the shaded corner of the room, while with tight-

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pressed lips and wrinkled brow he considered his experiences since he came to Seaton, and pronounced himself a fool. He had not been a fool in every respect, it was true; he hadn't been fresh, or boastful about himself, and he had not done things flagrantly wrong, but he saw clearly that many of his judgments had been mistaken. Strangely enough, the irritating incident of the evening did not so greatly depress him. He felt a certain satisfaction in the superiority of his behavior as compared with Mulcahy's, which served to offset the uneasiness caused by the teacher's error. But he did wish that he hadn't committed himself so far to intimacy with Mulcahy, and he regretted that he had invited him home for Sunday.

In the distractions of the evening, Sam overlooked one part of the French lesson for the next day. Mr. Alsop had given notice of a test on vocabulary, a comparatively easy matter to prepare if he had only remembered to study it. He was unpleasantly reminded of this omission at the recitation next morning, when Mr. Alsop announced that all those who failed to write cor-

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rectly the English equivalents of twenty of the twenty-five French words on the paper, must come to a "make-up" on Saturday at five. Sam had forgotten to study his vocabulary. He struggled over the list, and succeeded in getting but eighteen of the twenty-five. On Saturday morning Mr. Alsop read his name among those doomed to the five-o'clock make-up.

To be present at five o'clock on Saturday meant a late train home and the evening spoiled. Sam had secured out-of-town permission from the office, and had arranged to escort his mother to a meeting of his old school athletic association in the evening. It seemed hard — unjust — to be cut off from this prearranged visit, in order to take an exercise which involved hardly five minutes and could be as well taken at some other time. So the boy, having fretted and reviled for an hour, called at Mr. Alsop's room, and after explaining that the make-up would prevent his going home, offered to take it in the instructor's room immediately after his return.

"I don't see why you should have a privilege which the others have not; and I don't see why I

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should sacrifice my time to save a student from the results of his own neglect," said Mr. Alsop, tartly. Like many a serious but narrow-minded pedagogue, he was taking the wholesale failure of the class as a personal affront. He felt his dignity struck at almost as if the boys had deliberately refused to learn. To Sam Archer, moreover, he owed no favor.

"It's a slight matter," pleaded Sam, foolishly, "and it's going to keep me from going home. I got permission from the office three days ago."

"It is *not* a slight matter," declared Mr. Alsop, sharply. "I beg to differ with you. Neglect of work is never a slight matter. Permissions from the office are always provisional. You will come with the rest. I have no extra time to give you."

Sam withdrew, crestfallen and indignant. He understood that he was paying the penalty for the misunderstanding of the evening before, and also for the morning's shock to the teacher's self-esteem. The unfairness of it rankled deep. The loss of thirty-six hours at home, the breaking of the engagement with his mother, the abandonment of his plan of reunion with his old mates — all counted

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as nothing in the balance when weighed against Mr. Alsop's five minutes and ruffled dignity. The worst of it was the fact that there was no appeal. The principal was away on leave of absence for six months. Every teacher was autocrat in his own courses. To resist would be to collide with the whole machinery of government of an institution which prided itself on expelling annually more boys than any other school in the land. Between enduring in silence, and resorting to entreaties and flattery, — the only alternatives, — Sam did not hesitate a moment. The one he could bear, the other he would not stoop to.

On the way down to the telegraph office, where he sent a brief message to his mother, announcing that he could not get away, Sam drew an angry comparison between Mr. Alsop's methods and those of certain other instructors: Dr. Leighton in Greek had discovered his pupil's weakness on the verb and offered to give special help at any time the boy chose to call at his room; Mr. Howe in mathematics, finding him well advanced in geometry and algebra, had voluntarily suggested that he slight those subjects and apply the time thus gained

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where it was more needed; Professor Towle in English roughed him in the class when he got things wrong, but Towle had a heart of gold and was square as a brick. On the way back he dwelt on Mulcahy's treacherous selfishness of the evening before, which had set Mr. Alsop against him and had made him forget that wretched vocabulary. "There's one consolation," he muttered to himself. "I shan't have to take him home with me now."

But Mulcahy had no wish to be cheated of his visit to the Archers. "I'll fix that up," he promised eagerly, when Sam informed him of the change of plan. "Let me go and see Alsop. I'll tell him a yarn that'll bring him round in five minutes."

"What yarn?"

"Oh, I don't know; any old thing that'll go — something about a family party, or your mother's being sick and sending for you and your being so overcome by losing his respect that you didn't dare explain. It'll be dead easy."

"Easy or not, you won't do it!" replied Archer, savagely. "I won't have any one sucking round Alsop for me. You've told him lies enough, as it is."

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"Don't be a fool!" said Mulcahy, sharply.
"Don't you want to go?"

"No, I don't. I did, but I don't want to any more."

Mulcahy, disappointed here, had other forms of amusement. That afternoon Sam dropped in at the Sedgwicks' to call, and allowed himself to be persuaded to stay to dinner, at which meal he proved to his own satisfaction that the disasters of the day had not affected his appetite. Afterward he lingered in the society of Mrs. Sedgwick and Miss Margaret as long as it seemed decent, and departed for his room reasonably comforted in mind. As he crossed the street, in the rear of the Academy buildings, two familiar figures appeared opposite him under a gaslight and got away quickly into the darkness. They were John Fish and Mulcahy, each with an overcoat on his arm.

The next day John Fish was at church, wedged into the corner of a pew. He slept during most of the service. Mulcahy stayed in his room; his report next day informed the authorities that he had been suffering from an attack of indigestion. Fish took a long nap in the afternoon. He told

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Mr. Alsop, as they walked to dinner together, that he liked to pass Sunday quietly. Mulcahy was well enough to be present at the Christian Fraternity in the evening.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CHALLENGE

THE Christmas vacation brought Sam a chance to consider his school experiences away from the school atmosphere. He did this in part deliberately, in part by an unconscious process of comparison of school standards with home standards, the hard facts of student life with the fine and high ideals of his father and mother. Certain phases of schoolboy morality he talked over with Mr. Archer, who, pleased to receive the confidence of his son, met frankness with frankness and cleared Sam's mind of many a harassing doubt. The quiet trust of his parents braced the boy strongly against the influence of evil.

Sam went back to school resolved that if he could not have the intimacy of the best he would at least not associate with the worst; if he could not be popular with those whom he respected, he would not seek the favor of those whom he could

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not respect. He was convinced that he was not marked for great distinction in his school career. He might, by keeping eternally at it, in course of time make a fair showing as a hurdler; he could always get good marks in mathematics and history; he could maintain friendly relations with a good many fellows. More than this, however, was not to be hoped for. He could not, if he would, go on a still-hunt for honors after the calculating fashion with which Mulcahy was scheming to gain possession of the Yale Cup. He was not made that way.

The work of the winter was for Sam uneventful and plodding. He toiled with sullen aversion on his French, with devotion on his Greek, with calm satisfaction on his mathematics and history, with resignation on his other subjects. In the gymnasium he practised pole-vaulting; and on the wooden track outside, with Collins's assistance, he struggled with dashes and starts and hurdles, and met discouragement with a laugh. He managed also to find free intervals for a little reading. On the whole the laborious life proved not unpleasant, and time slipped rapidly away.

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Besides himself, Jones and Mulcahy were the chief exponents of the art of pole-vaulting. Jones was the star of the school, brilliant and unapproachable. He could do ten feet whenever he wanted to, and was deemed capable of very much better performances. Mulcahy started with nine feet, and Sam with eight feet six. After a month's work, Mulcahy had climbed to nine three and Sam to nine feet. They practised at different times, but each listened greedily to reports of the other's progress, and while openly depreciating his own powers, hoped from day to day to discover the precious knack of combining spring and throw, which would put him well ahead of his rival. Mulcahy was handicapped by his weight, Sam by his length and slowness.

The intimacy between the two was lapsing. The process was slow, because Sam was too good-natured to quarrel openly and Mulcahy too thick-skinned to be sensitive to ordinary chilliness of treatment. Sam put himself to some inconvenience to be absent from his room when he thought Mulcahy might call; he likewise cultivated a friendship with Kendrick, whom Mulcahy dis-

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liked. In time Mulcahy awoke to the fact that Archer's neglect was intentional, and accepted the rebuff as he would have accepted the final refusal of an expected purchaser to take a book. While there was no open break between them, Sam shrewdly suspected that to reject Mulcahy as a friend was to invite him as an enemy.

"Where's your friend Mulcahy these days?" Peck asked, one evening early in February. "You don't seem to be so thick with him as you were a while ago."

"No," answered Sam, indifferently. "I don't seem to be."

"What's the matter?" pursued Peck. "Been scrapping?"

"No. We just don't see as much of each other as we used to."

Duncan fidgeted about a little, and then blurted out, "Of course it's none of my business, — except as I've a little claim in the room and have some interest in knowing whom I'm likely to find here, — but I'd really like to be told whether you're just taking a vacation from him or have got through with him for good."

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“Well, I guess I’m through with him for good,” confessed Sam.

Duncan’s face broke into a smile. “Glad to hear it! Only you ought to have done it long ago. When you ran up against him in the pole-vault, you probably began to see what sort of a fellow he is.”

“I haven’t run up against him in the pole-vault,” replied Sam. “We don’t practise together. It was something that happened last term that opened my eyes.”

“Oh, it was!” said Peck, in a tone between a question and an exclamation. He waited a little to see whether Archer was going to explain, but as Sam volunteered no information, he continued: “It’s about time for me to begin to work, if I’m going to pass off those exams in June. I couldn’t study here with that fellow hanging round.”

“I’m sorry if I drove you out,” said Sam, rather stiffly.

“Oh, that’s all right. I didn’t have to go unless I wanted to, and you had just as good a right to have your friends round as I did to have mine.

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I couldn't really expect you to take up all my prejudices."

"There was prejudice all round, I'm afraid," responded Sam. "I had my share. I thought you were down on Mulcahy just because he was a poor fellow who was pushing his way up, and it made me so mad I couldn't see anything wrong with him. It wasn't till after he'd played me a dirty trick with Alsop that my eyes began to open. Then I thought it all over during vacation, and made up my mind that he wasn't a safe person to fool with."

"I didn't hear anything about any trouble with Alsop," said Duncan, with evident curiosity.

Sam saw that he was committed, and told his tale. Peck listened with deep interest and frequent exclamations. "I don't think I should have taken that as sweetly as you did," he said at length. "No fellow has a right to put you in that position. Why didn't you say: 'Mr. Alsop, I told you the truth. I don't smoke,' and let Mulcahy get out of it as well as he could?"

"I didn't like to do that," replied Sam. "It didn't seem honorable."

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"I don't know but you're right," said Duncan, thoughtfully. "You couldn't play the mucker because he did. It wouldn't have done any good, either. He'd have lied you right down."

"Perhaps so. I couldn't think of anything to say that wouldn't make it worse."

Duncan nodded agreement. "I suppose it would. You've got a lot more sense than I thought you had."

Sam smiled grimly at the dubious compliment.

"Look here," went on Duncan, taking up a brown-covered book from the table. "You're a shark in geometry, aren't you?"

"I got B plus for a term mark," said Sam, complacently.

"Well, I wish you'd explain this formula. I can understand equation 3, but how you get 5 from it, as the book says, is beyond me."

It wasn't a difficult thing to explain, nor was Duncan as stupid about geometry as he thought himself. Sam turned the clean white pages of the book.

"New?"

"Yes!" ejaculated Duncan, with indignant

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emphasis, "the third I've had this year. It's a scandal the way books disappear in this school. You might as well throw 'em away as leave 'em out on the hall racks. The last one I had, I put my initials in at the bottom of the next to the last page. If you ever see a book with 'D. P.' in it, confiscate it —it's mine."

Duncan stopped that afternoon for a few minutes at the room of Fuzzy Woods in Odlin House.

"How's Shirley?" he asked in the course of gossip. "Done anything queer lately?"

"I guess not," drawled Woods. "He's got two or three duels on."

Duncan giggled. "What for? —insults?"

"Yes," returned Woods. "It's always for insults."

"Will they fight?"

"Naw, the duels never come off —at least none has so far. They think it's a great joke till he gets fierce as a pirate and asks 'em which they'll take, swords or pistols. Then most of 'em try to sneak out of it. He told Lauter he'd shoot him anyway, and scared the life out of him."

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"Has he challenged you?"

"Naw, I let him alone."

"What's the matter with the fellow?"

"He was in school a long time in France and Switzerland; he got a lot of crazy ideas there about honor and insults and settling things by duels."

"Can he really fence?" questioned Duncan.

"How should I know!" answered Fuzzy, indifferently.

Just then some one knocked and was yelled at to come in. It proved to be Shirley himself, a slender, well-groomed boy with an English accent, who had come to borrow a translation. On Woods's invitation he stayed. Duncan fell to asking him questions about foreign schools and schoolboys. The two got on finely until Duncan wanted to know what kind of athletics they had in these foreign places, and Shirley confessed that there were no regular sports.

"What do they do for exercise?"

"Oh, they walk and fence and play tennis a little."

"No track athletics, or football, or baseball, or rowing?"

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"No. Football wouldn't be allowed."

"Why not?"

"It isn't a gentleman's game."

Duncan sniffed. "It isn't a lady's game. Don't they even have cricket?"

"No, they don't know any more about cricket than they do about baseball."

"I suppose they all go to walk two and two, like the girls in a convent. They must be a choice lot of little mollycoddles!"

"I shouldn't advise you to call one of them by that name!" declared Shirley, warming up.

"Why not?"

"You'd have a duel on your hands."

"Rats!" said Duncan, contemptuously. "No one but a barbarian fights duels these days."

"That shows how little you know about it," said Shirley, stiffly.

"Would you fight a duel?" demanded Peck.

"Certainly, if honor demanded it."

"Then you'd be a barbarian. Don't you think so, Fuzzy?"

"I don't think anything about it," answered Woods, who had been vainly trying to catch

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Duncan's eye and warn him that he was entering dangerous ground.

"Half barbarian and half fool," continued Peck.

Shirley rose and stood erect, gazing straight at the visitor, with indignant eyes and reddening cheeks.

"I am not used to being called a fool!" he said solemnly.

"Who called you a fool?" asked Duncan, coolly. "I didn't."

"You said a man who would fight a duel was a fool and a barbarian," repeated Shirley.

"Half a fool and half a barbarian," corrected Peck.

"But I said that I would fight a duel."

"Then you must be it," asserted Duncan, with nonchalance, stretching himself out in his chair and putting his hands in his pockets.

"Those are insulting words to apply to a gentleman. You will take them back!" cried Shirley, hotly.

"I didn't apply them — just made a general statement. You took 'em yourself. Perhaps you felt they fitted."

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“That’s quite enough!” said Shirley, slowly, taking a step forward. “It’s evident that you mean to insult me. We will settle the point of honor in a gentleman’s way. Name your weapons and the place of meeting. Shall it be swords or pistols? The choice is yours.”

CHAPTER XIV

AN AFFAIR OF HONOR

"SWORDS or pistols!" echoed Duncan, sufficiently aroused to sit up in his chair. "What have swords and pistols to do with it?"

"They are the recognized weapons for settling affairs of honor. Perhaps you were ignorant of the fact." Shirley spoke with scornful dignity.

"This isn't an affair of honor, it's a mere difference of opinion," protested Duncan. "You wouldn't fight over that, I hope."

"I'd fight over insults!"

Duncan laughed aloud, reckless of the fact that his laugh added to the affront.

"What good does fighting do? If you should wound me with a sword, it wouldn't make the truth of what I said any less true, and if I should put a bullet into you, it wouldn't drive out the insult. I say that the man who fights duels is a barbarian. If I fight, I make myself a barbarian."

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"Swords or pistols!" insisted Shirley, with a dogged indifference to logic.

"Neither," answered Peck.

"Then you are not a gentleman, and are a coward. You have my contempt."

"Hold on there!" exclaimed Peck, dropping his smile and his air of pleasantry. "Who's calling names now?"

"They are names usually applied to a man who insults you and won't give you satisfaction."

"If you think I owe you satisfaction for our difference of opinion, you must owe me something for calling me a contemptible coward," announced Duncan, in serious tones. "I'll propose—" he hesitated, and approached a step nearer Shirley; "I'll propose bowie-knives!"

Shirley recoiled. "I am not used to bowie-knives."

"Nor I to swords and pistols," said Duncan.

The fairness of this answer appealed to the man of honor. "Then we must find some other way," he said. "Insults can only be wiped out with blood. We'll play chess, and the one who's beaten will commit suicide."

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At this proposition Duncan stared hard. For a moment he harbored the suspicion that Shirley was chaffing him, not he Shirley. But the boy's solemn face and tragic manner immediately dispelled this illusion.

"I don't play chess," Duncan answered with plausible earnestness. "Let's make it golf, and leave to the one who's defeated the option of committing suicide or not. We can consider him dead anyway."

"I don't play golf."

At this point Woods, seeing a chance to bring the deadly affair to a bloodless conclusion, interrupted with a shrewd proposal.

"Why not run it off? Both of you can run. Make the course a certain number of times round the wooden track, and let the fellow that's beaten set up fudges and stuff for the principals and seconds. I call that a very honorable arrangement."

"It isn't quite regular," remarked Shirley, doubtfully. "Properly there ought to be some blood shed."

"If I'm beaten, I'll apologize," said Duncan.

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"How does that strike you? I suppose on a pinch I might produce a little blood. I don't want to neglect any formalities."

"I think I can accept without that," said Shirley, with magnanimity.

"The one that's beaten sets up for the crowd; don't forget that!" Woods interposed. "Whose second am I going to be?"

"You can have him and I'll get some one else, or I'll take him and you can have some one else." Duncan was truly generous.

"I'll take him," said Shirley.

"Then, sir, I will send my second to wait upon yours and arrange for the details of the combat. I have the honor, sir, to wish you good afternoon. We shall meet again!" This grand peroration safely and pompously delivered, Duncan stalked solemnly away.

So much time had been consumed in this highly interesting interview with Shirley that Duncan postponed until after recitation the pleasure of retailing the whole story to Bruce, and giving him the chance to act as second. On the way home he remembered that Bruce was to be in

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Boston the following day, but this did not dampen his spirits. Seconds for such an occasion could be obtained by the squad. He flew upstairs to his room chuckling and stumbling, nodded absently to Archer, who was moping over a Greek lesson, and took up an algebra with the intention of utilizing the fifteen minutes remaining to gain some idea of the methods of the review chapter which was the lesson for the four-o'clock flunkers' class. Through the carelessness of inattention he ran on a snag in the first explanation, and had to call on his roommate to help him off. Then he worked out two problems near the beginning and one near the end of the exercise, threw the book on the table, looked at his watch, rose, stretched, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"I never saw anything so funny as that in the algebra," remarked Sam, observing his merry room-mate over his reading glasses.

"It isn't in the algebra, it isn't in any book," cried Duncan, gleefully. "Nothing like it ever happens in a book. I'm engaged in an affair of honor; I'm going to fight a duel!"

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"A duel!" exclaimed Sam, aghast. "With whom?"

"Oh, a fellow you don't know, in Odlin House."

"When?"

"To-morrow, on the running track behind the gym. Will you be my second?"

The invitation was due to a momentary impulse of friendliness. Archer was a track expert and a decent fellow; why not let him in?

Duncan stood with hands in trousers pockets, smiling roguishly and watching the expression on Archer's face. Appalled by the grim picture called up by the word "duel," and puzzled to reconcile this conception with Peck's evident gayety, Sam knew not whether to accept or refuse. Then there recurred to his mind the serious incident of the last term, when Kendrick had sprung instantly to his help, and he answered in Kendrick's own words, "Sure I will!"

"That's right," said Peck. "There'll be no end of sport. You see — oh, hang that bell! — I'll tell you all about it after class."

At half-past two the next afternoon, when the outskirts of the gymnasium were clear of idlers,

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the duel was fought. It was agreed that Archer should be starter and Woods judge at the finish; the course was three times round the track. Shirley took the lead at the start, running in quick, short steps, with Peck pounding away in eager strides behind him. Shirley tripped past the judge on the first lap, ten yards ahead of his pursuer, and went pattering around the curve and up the back stretch as if his legs were driven by a gasoline engine. At the lower end, however, his pace began to tell upon him; the pat-pat of the striking soles became slower, the steps shorter. Duncan perceived that the time for his spurt had come, but he was twelve yards behind when he crossed the line the second time.

The third lap proved fierce beyond all expectation. Shirley, game to the last, clenched his fists and lashed himself on. Duncan, stung by the fear of an ignominious end to his adventure, plying his legs to the limit of his strength, with dry mouth and dizzy head panted after his rival. He gained but slowly. On the back stretch he was still five yards behind. As they came down toward the finish line, two wobbly, tottering figures

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with set eyes and strained, twisted features, one close to the shoulder of the other, Sam, seized with the fear that both would drop before the finish, reached forward eagerly to catch Duncan as he touched the line. Duncan, keeping his feet to the end, plunged helplessly into Sam's arms. At the same time Woods received the quivering, gasping Shirley, who lay upon him for a few seconds, an inert dead weight. Presently Shirley opened his eyes and looked up. "Who — won?" he breathed rather than spoke.

"I'm blest if I know!" answered Woods. "I forgot to see. Who got it, Archer?"

"I didn't notice," said Sam. "It wasn't my business to judge the finish. I was getting ready to catch this fellow."

"They were right together anyway. We'll have to call it a tie," decided the judge.

"That means we don't get anything," observed Archer.

"We'll run it — over again —" panted Shirley, over his shoulder, as Woods led him away to the gymnasium.

"No, we won't!" whispered Duncan in a broken

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undertone into his second's ear. "I'd rather take my chances with swords or pistols. Catch me running any more races without training. I'll bet we made a new record."

It developed in the course of the afternoon that there had been unseen witnesses of the spectacle, and these witnesses not only spread highly colored versions of what they had seen, but also asked rude, saucy questions of the actors. The fellows in Odlin House cleverly pried certain admissions out of Shirley, guessed at what they did not know, and put in circulation a tale which was received with greedy ears and grinning faces. Duncan bounced into 7 Hale in the middle of the evening and planted himself, an outraged victim of treachery, before Archer's chair.

"What did you want to go and blab all this thing for?" he began, glowering fiercely at his roommate's startled face.

"I didn't," replied Sam, quickly. "I haven't said a word about it."

"It's all over school. Some one's been giving it away. They say it was you."

Sam tossed his book upon the table with a

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spiteful jerk. "They lie, then. I haven't even told who won the race. I've referred every single fellow to you."

Duncan's wrath gave way to gloom. "Some one's done it, anyway. They're all joshing me about it."

"I can't help that," said Sam. "What do you care? Laugh it off."

"I've been laughing it off. I've laughed till my face aches, but that doesn't make me any happier. Do you know, I could have sworn I was ahead of that fellow at the finish. Why didn't you keep your eyes open?"

"I was thinking of you, not of the race. You looked as if you were all in, ten feet before you got to me. I expected to see you drop."

Sam waited for Peck to reply, but Peck offered no comment.

"As a matter of fact," continued Sam, frankly, "the last time I *did* notice your positions, Shirley was a good yard ahead."

"I'm dead sure I beat him at the finish," said Duncan, obstinately. "I wish I'd had Bruce there!"

CHAPTER XV

SAM'S FIRST RACE

ONE result of the Shirley-Peck duel was to check the developing friendship of the inmates of 7 Hale. Duncan felt that Archer ought to have been on the watch when he passed Shirley at the finish — he took most indignantly the suggestion that Shirley was really ahead after all. Sam, having performed his part to the best of his ability, was disgusted with the childish obstinacy with which Duncan cherished his sense of injury. Coldness again marked the relations of the room-mates.

Another consequence of the bloody fray was the appearance of Shirley among the track men. Bruce got him out — no one could long resist the spell of Bruce's winning manner — and Collins appointed him his proper task. They tried him at first on the longer stretches, but six hundred yards and even three hundred were soon found to be distances for which Shirley's quick stride was not

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adapted. Then Collins set him to sprinting, and rubbed his hands with delight over the result. "Frenchie" took to starting and sprinting as a hound to a rabbit trail. In a week his starts were instantaneous, and his legs twinkled along the forty yards like the feet of a running mouse. Duncan was out too for the three hundred, and doing well, his friends said, though with old Chouder in the event, second place was the best he could hope for.

Mulcahy's attitude toward Sam was changing. There had been no outward break in their relations, but Mulcahy had become distant in his greeting, and only showed his old cordiality when he had some special object to attain. He was busy now with what Duncan called "a new graft" — getting members for the Harvard Club, of which he was secretary and treasurer. Every boy who was preparing for Harvard was pressed to join in order to prove his loyalty. Every new member paid one dollar for a printed shingle signed by the secretary. The club had no meetings, except to elect officers and to be photographed. It had no expenses except the price of the shingle plate

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with fifty cheap prints, and the cost of inserting a group photograph in the school Annual.

"Easy money!" said Duncan in disgust, when Sam reported that he had joined. "He's got my dollar too."

"You don't think he keeps the money, do you?" asked Sam, surprised at the implied charge.

"You don't think he gives it back, do you?" retorted Duncan.

"No, but there must be miscellaneous expenses."

"You can call it that if you want to. The account stands something like this: twenty-five shingles sold to new members at a dollar each, twenty-five dollars; twenty-five shingles bought at a dime each, two-fifty; picture in the Annual, five; miscellaneous, seventeen-fifty; balance in treasury at the beginning of next year, nothing. Conundrum: who got the seventeen-fifty? Your friend Mulcahy is a slick one!"

"He isn't my friend!" declared Sam, stoutly.

"He is if he can get anything out of you; if he can't, he's your enemy."

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Vexed at the slur at his simplicity implied in Duncan's words, yet half inclined to acknowledge that the senior was right, Sam took his geometry and departed for the Academy. It lacked still fifteen minutes to the time for recitation, but he hoped to find among the few steadies who often came early either Phipps or Entstein, the sharks of the section, and get an idea from one of them as to the last original in the lesson. He had solved four out of the five.

No sooner was he seated at a desk than Mulcahy came in, glanced round the room, made quick estimate of the possibilities offered, and slipped into a seat beside Archer.

"Hello, Archer!" he exclaimed, his voice ringing with cordiality. "I haven't seen you for a week. How's the pole-vault going?"

"Not very well," responded Sam, coldly.

"If you're doing no better than I am, you're rotten!" went on Mulcahy, amiably. "I can't make nine feet any more — seem to have lost the knack. I hear you did nine four the other day."

"Nine three," corrected Sam.

"I can't touch that. I see where I come out

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at the bottom in the Shield Meet. How many originals did you get to-day?"

"Four."

"You're a shark! What kind of figure did you have for 213?"

Sam opened his papers and showed a neatly drawn diagram with his proof carefully indicated beneath. Mulcahy studied it silently for two full minutes. "That's the way I did it," he said. "I wasn't sure it was right. Did you get 214?"

Sam handed over another sheet, to which his companion gave as close a scrutiny as to the first. "I don't understand that," he said, pointing to a statement. "How do you get that?"

"That's easy," replied Sam, proud of his achievement. "I'll show you." He looked about for a loose sheet of paper.

"Use this," offered Mulcahy, turning to the blank page at the end of his book. "I can rub it out afterward."

Sam took the geometry and quickly jotted down on the fly leaf the omitted intermediate steps. "I see that," said Mulcahy, and devoted himself once more to the study of Sam's diagrams. Sam

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turned back the leaves of the geometry. On the margin of the page next to the last he found the two letters D. P.

This discovery effectually occupied Sam's mind during the few minutes that remained before the recitation bell sounded. His papers went unnoticed through Mulcahy's hands. While the bell was ringing, Mulcahy asked a last question, and Sam leaned absently toward him to follow the questioner's finger upon the page. At this moment, while their heads were close together, some one called sharply from the door at their side, "Archer!"

Sam turned and beheld Duncan Peck grinning at him in the doorway.

"What did I tell you!" Peck threw at him in a jeering undertone, and disappeared behind the entering class.

"There's one thing I could tell *you*," thought Sam, grimly, as he faced front again, "but I won't. You can find your missing books yourself!"

When the instructor asked how many had succeeded in proving the whole five originals, Phipps

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alone put up his hand. Three, including Archer and Mulcahy, averred that they could do four. Others professed three and two and one, and some none at all. Mulcahy was sent to the board and returned in triumph, sure of a good mark for the recitation. He had made excellent use of Archer's solution. Sam was not called on.

To the blasé attendant from the town, the Faculty Shield Meet of that year would have seemed little different from a dozen other events of the kind which he had witnessed. Collins and Bruce, testing it by a standard of their own, called it satisfactory. The old boys who came back from the colleges in fine attire to act as judges spoke of it with patronizing interest as a success. For two contestants, at least, it was the most important event that the school year had as yet developed. Shirley, the duellist, won his trial heat in the forty yards, though some derisive remarks were made about him as he crouched on the starting line. These remarks ceased when he took his second heat, an easy yard ahead of his nearest rival. In the third heat he was again the

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leader. In the final he was matched against Gay, the best hundred-yards man in school.

Sam and Taylor stood together near the finish line.

"I wish Shirley would beat that Gay, even if Gay does belong to my class," remarked Taylor, maliciously. "Since he won the hundred last year at Hillbury, he wears a hat four sizes bigger. I don't suppose there's any chance for Frenchie."

"Lots of chance," returned Archer, wisely. "Shirley strikes his stride in the very first yard. He may get put back, of course."

There was a false start, but it was Gay who went back a foot; another, and Fairmount joined him. All four hung on the next set, and the pistol cracked. While the others were still rising, Shirley was shooting forward with his feet well under him. He was a yard ahead at the end of ten yards; at the forty no one was within five feet of him.

"Bully for Frenchie!" cried Taylor. "That'll take down the swelling on Gay's head an inch or two. What's the time? Four and three-fifths? Why, that's the record!" And Taylor ran off to have a hand in the boisterous congratula-

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tions which the lower middlers were lavishing on their unexpected champion.

Sam was on his way to the starting line for the forty-five-yard hurdles. He had no chance against Fairmount, he knew well, but Fairmount was not in his heat, and he hoped to survive the first trial at any rate. If he could only get his long legs to swinging faster! He crouched for his start, a little white around the lips, but cool, waited while Somers was put back, and got off reasonably well. Somers was ahead of him at the second hurdle, but he caught him on the third, and breasted the tape a foot ahead. In the finals, Fairmount was outside him and Edmands and Foote inside. This time he was slower. All three got off before him, but Foote stumbled at the first hurdle and fell behind. Edmands he overtook as he passed the second. Together they ran for the third, but Archer cleared with less waste of time, and was close behind Fairmount at the finish. It was not victory, but he was fully satisfied with second place.

After that Sam had nothing to do but sit content in his warm bathrobe and watch the other

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paces. Bruce, of course, took the six hundred yards, and Weatherford the thousand, both veterans who surprised no one. Then old Chouder's race, the three hundred, was called. Duncan was in the pack that chased at Chouder's heels, gradually scattering behind as the pace told. Duncan was not the last by any means, nor quick-stepping Shirley, who held the pole behind the leader, and after gaining fifteen yards on the first round, kept himself in the van during the second. Both Peck and Richmond spurred to pass him on the final stretch, but neither could quite reach him. Shirley fell across the line two feet behind Chouder, with Peck a yard farther back.

"I wonder what he'll say now!" thought Sam, gleefully. "He can't pretend he beat Frenchie this time!"

But alas! Sam's complacency was soon to receive a shock. In the indoor pole-vault, which Jones won at ten feet four amid great applause, Archer did his expected nine feet three. Mulcahy, however, who had pretended two days before that he could no longer reach nine feet, vaulted nine six with ease! And when Sam taxed

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him with the inconsistency of his words and his performance, he smiled contemptuously, and "guessed he had got back his form!"

That night Sam waited a sleepy hour beyond his bedtime to catch Peck, who spent the evening out.

"What about Shirley now?" he demanded, as soon as the door was closed behind the truant.

"He can run," answered Duncan, coolly.

"He licked you to-day, right and good, didn't he?"

"Yes, he did," conceded Duncan.

"What about the day of the duel," pursued Sam. "Didn't he beat you then, too?"

"Perhaps he did and perhaps he didn't. Who can tell?"

"I wasn't so far out, anyway," growled Sam. And Duncan thought so too, but not being wholly ready to acknowledge the error, he deferred his admission to a later time.

CHAPTER XVI

HE TRIES AGAIN

ON the Saturday after the Faculty Shield day, Sam ran in the forty-five-yard hurdles again, in the handicap meet which regularly follows the scratch contests. The handicapper thought one yard about the right allowance for the long-legged upper middler; Somers got two and Foote three. Fairmount ran from scratch. It was a hot race, with every contestant hoping to cross the line first, the man in front driving himself that his advantage might not be wrested from him, the pursuers confident of superiority and struggling to secure the positions which belonged to them. Sam felt the presence of Somers and Foote ahead pulling him forward as the magnet attracts steel; his legs followed each other faster than they had ever gone before; the three hurdles were but three exhilarating bounds in his course. Forgetting Fairmount, who was behind, he ran down Somers,

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pressed on after Foote, and passed him by a convulsive straining effort at the finish. Never before had he felt what it was to *fight* his way in a race; to mark his adversary and beat him, as one throws his opponent in a wrestling bout, or as the tackler downs his man, surely and hard, on the football field. In his struggle to pass Foote he had kept ahead of Fairmount, who finished two feet behind him.

Collins was pleased, as much with the new spirit of the hurdler as with his success in the event. "He's slow," he remarked to Bruce, "but he'll come in time."

"This year?" questioned Bruce, closely. It was "this year," the year of his captaincy, that interested Bruce.

"I can't say," answered Collins, thoughtfully. "It may take a long while. He's a good, steady boy; he'll come all right sometime."

Duncan Peck, too, seemed to be influenced by Sam's modest success in the handicap meeting. He confessed one day in a burst of confidence, after Sam had led him through the maze of a foolish algebra problem about two men who rowed

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past each other up and down stream—each, apparently, with a stop watch and a log line—that his duel joke with Shirley had proved a boomerang. In return Sam told him of the initials—D. P.—in the back of Mulcahy's book.

"It's mine all right," remarked Duncan, "but I've got another now, and it isn't worth while to make a row about it. I can't prove anything against him. He'd say he bought it at Moran's or of one of those fellows who were fired last week. It shows you what he is, though."

"I know what he is," said Sam, blushing. "I don't need any more lessons."

Another person with whom Sam hoped that he might gain some influence by the prestige of his improvement in the hurdles was his second cousin, Wally Sedgwick. Wally was a lower middler, active-minded and ambitious. Athletics would have given a natural scope to his energy, but he was too small and immature to have any chance in Seaton sports. He had fallen in with a set of idle boys of not the highest standards, who appealed to Wally's imagination as gay young bloods; they knew things and were up to date. None of these

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was in the class of John Fish, a reprobate, and callous to the opinion of his associates; nor in that of Mulcahy, whose ambition led him to conceal his wrong-doing, but could not prevent his determined selfishness from pushing to the surface. The wickedness of Wally's friends lay mainly in talk and swagger, but they had already suggested to him that the code of morals taught in his home was goody-goody, and that the proper way to show his spirit was to do "what everybody did." Wally was popular with many of the older boys because he was the brother of Margaret Sedgwick. They bestowed attentions on him in the hope of "making themselves solid" with Miss Margaret, caring little whether these attentions were good for the boy or not.

The track team were going to Boston to compete in the schoolboy games of the Boston Athletic Association. For the first time in his school career Sam was to be a member of a Seaton team in contest with other schools. He was to wear the significant red letters on his shirt, was to see his name on the big official programme as a representative of Seaton, was to be trusted to do a part in gaining

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public honors for the school. He thought of it by day, dreamed of it by night, and longed, as only an inexperienced tyro can long, to do credit to those who trusted him. Mr. Archer, who sympathized with his son in all innocent interests, that he might wield the stronger influence when great questions of conduct came up for settlement, ordered a ticket and promised to be present at the contests. Sam wrote the usual disclaimer of any expectation of getting a place, but his secret hopes ran high. Why shouldn't Fairmount win first and he second, as they had done at Seaton?

Then came the trip in pleasant but orderly company, the lunch in town, the dressing in confused, cramped quarters, the facing of tier on tier of partisans encircling the huge room, the disorderly jumble about the starting lines, the hurried calling of contestants, the uproar of rival cheers — and at last the all-important summons. Few looked upon that particular heat of the forty-five-yard hurdles with special interest. Occasional friends of runners scattered through the benches, Mr. Archer straining his eyes at the long, lank figure crouching in the outside course, Collins ever

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calmly observant of his protégés, the little batch of eager Seatonians watching the red letters, a noisy squad cheering the wearer of a big W—these were the real audience.

The pistol cracked. The line shot forward, over hurdles, through hurdles, stampeding for the tape. Sam stumbled, caught his step again and dashed blindly on. He sprang for the last hurdle as another was leaving it. A blue N was first, the W second, Sam an unplaced third. The starters were calling the sixth heat.

It was all over in ten seconds—the set, the start, the struggle, the finish, Sam's dream of achievement. He slipped into a corner by his schoolmates and tried to forget his disappointment in watching the efforts of his friends. He saw Kilham of Hillbury beat out Fairmount by a foot in the finals of the hurdles. He cheered vigorously when Gay took the forty. He groaned in dismay as Bruce was pocketed on the curve of the track in the six hundred and forced behind. When Weatherford won the thousand yards and Brewster the mile, and Jones soared a handbreadth above the bar after all rivals had failed, he exulted

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with pure delight. At such times the sight of the success of his school almost comforted him for his own failure. But when unfamiliar letters were in the van, when the Seaton runners were lost in the field of pursuers, then the fruitlessness of his own effort recurred to him afresh, and the folly of his hopes. Abashed, he glanced up at the indistinct face in the distant gallery and wondered whether his father felt himself the victim of false representations. Exactly what his father did think he had no opportunity to discover. When Sam looked for him after the pole-vault, his place was empty; Mr. Archer, having stayed to the limit of his time, was hurrying for his train.

The next day Sam approached the groups of chattering acquaintances with some dread of sarcastic comment. His fears were needless. Kendrick and Taylor and a few others remarked sympathetically on his "hard luck"; Duncan Peck made a creditable effort to be encouraging; but the majority showed no concern whatever in his failure. This contemptuous indifference on the part of the many, this assumption that he didn't count or that nothing was expected of him

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anyway, stirred Sam's fighting blood. He did not need the consolation which Collins gave when he spoke of the event as "just practice," nor the inspiration of Bruce's gay derision of himself for being blocked off on the track. The public disdain was stimulus enough to a proud spirit. Sam's resolution to brook no discouragement until time had fully proved his incompetency dates from that day.

But there were other interests in Sam's daily life besides hurdling. His lessons were going, some well, some tolerably, some ill. In French he did not get ahead, and consequently he did not gain in favor with Mr. Alsop. In truth, it is to be feared that Sam did not try his very best for the lord of his entry. The experienced had informed him that if one did well enough with two or three teachers to make himself solid with them, they would defend him against those with whom he did ill. As Sam's schedule was a full one and some neglect was inevitable, he followed his inclination and neglected Mr. Alsop. That gentleman did not relish neglect; it offended his dignity and cut through the smooth coating of his

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self-satisfaction. Mr. Alsop would never have struck an enemy whose hands were bound, but he did not hesitate to assail in the classroom with personal flings and stinging sarcasms the luckless boy who incurred his displeasure. Unable to strike back, the boy endured in silence and nursed his sense of unjust treatment with sullen, unforgiving wrath. Mr. Alsop meant well, but he lacked the instinct of fairness.

In the dormitory entry there were troubles for which Sam and Birdie Fowle were generally held responsible by Mr. Alsop, — Sam as the accessory who was too clever to be detected, Birdie as the criminal occasionally caught in the act. Some one, supposed to have been Birdie, had thrown water out of a window in the vain attempt to reach a boy who was hurling taunts from below. Mr. Alsop had called up Fowle and charged him with the offence. Birdie had acknowledged his sin. The teacher, instead of welcoming this frankness as an encouraging symptom, and by tact and kindness inspiring in that careless youth the desire to keep the peace, read him a harsh lecture, put him on “special pro,” and proved

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to the indignant satisfaction of the boy that the fellows were right when they said that honesty was not the best policy in dealing with profs. Injustice being the rule, one might as well be actually bad, as good and always suspected of badness.

Soon after this the day's collection of waste paper in the wire grate in the basement was set on fire, causing small damage, but much excitement throughout the well and great chagrin to the official regulator thereof. Fortunately for Birdie, his presence at recitation at the time enabled him to prove a complete alibi. Right upon the heels of this act of vandalism some miscreant, in the middle of the evening study hour, set off a cannon cracker in the entry. Mr. Alsop, who was at home, tore open his door and rushed savagely up the stairs. Through a dense cloud of smoke he descried John Fish standing in his doorway.

"What is it, Fish?" Mr. Alsop demanded angrily.

"Some one's set off a cannon cracker, sir," answered Fish. "I was just coming out to see if I couldn't catch the fellow."

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Doors were open now about the stairway, heads peered over from above.

"Could you tell where it came from?"

"No, sir."

"Did you have anything to do with it, Booth?"

"No, sir."

"You, Rand?"

"No, sir."

"You, Moorhead?"

"No, sir."

"You, Taylor?"

"No, sir."

"You, Fish?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Alsop went upstairs, called out every occupant of every room, and put to all the same question. Fowle and Archer he asked twice. Peck was out, and so was Lord's room-mate. Otherwise the entire well was canvassed. After the cross-examination was concluded, the teacher gathered the whole company into his room.

"Some one has told me a falsehood," he began solemnly. "I do not know who it is, but I can guess. To that person I want to say that I

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consider a lie as much worse than setting off crackers, as crackers are worse than an ordinary rough-house. The one who is responsible will do well to come to me and confess the truth. The rest of you who are shielding the guilty one should remember that by keeping silent you assume a share in the guilt. If I can't have order in this well by any other means, I'll put the whole well on study hours, and if that doesn't answer, it will have to be cleaned out altogether. The school has no use for rowdies."

This last threat Mr. Alsop did not really mean, as it would have involved firing the studious Moorhead, the good John Fish, and the cherub Rand,— the sweetest, most friendly, most diligent little boy that Mr. Alsop had on his list. But instances were known of whole dormitory wells ruthlessly swept clear at an indignation meeting of an offended faculty. Fowle and Archer as the scapegoats of the well foresaw trouble for themselves, at any rate, whatever punishments were inflicted. They got together soon after Mr. Alsop's audience was dismissed, and held wrathful council. At the end they picked up

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Taylor and moved down on John Fish, who opened his door a crack to see who was knocking, and then opened it wide because a big foot prevented its being closed.

"I'm getting popular," he said, smiling feebly at his visitors.

"Not with this gang!" said Taylor, as he shut the door behind him.

"You set off that cracker!" blurted Sam, with suppressed fierceness.

"I didn't."

"You lie! You did," retorted Sam. "You know you did. We want to give you warning that this funny business has got to stop. You know that Fowle and I get the credit if anything happens here, whether we're in it or not. If we get soaked by Alsop for anything that's done hereafter, we'll maul you so that you can't stand!"

Fish looked at the trio in apprehension. Archer's fight with Runyon had passed into dormitory history; he was regarded as a dangerous man. Fowle and Taylor were solid fellows, the latter a member of his class football team. Fish himself, though easily superior to the smaller

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occupants of the well, would have shrunk from single combat with any one of the militant trio. His chance against them all would have been very poor indeed.

“What do you want?” he asked sullenly.

“We want you to cut it out, that’s all,” answered Fowle.

“Cut it out entirely,” added Taylor.

“Well, I will,” answered Fish, in a sour tone, “but I can’t be responsible for everything that happens.”

CHAPTER XVII

A FOOLHARDY ADVENTURE

THE inhabitants of the east well of Hale became lovers of peace. Mr. Alsop had not full confidence in the change, scenting something ominous in the unnatural calm. The rumor that had spread among his colleagues that Alsop was having a sad time in his dormitory touched that gentleman in a sensitive spot. Ability to get on with pupils is considered a most desirable quality in a teacher, even in an institution like Seaton, in which the headsman's axe is the chief disciplinary weapon, and the fear of it the great persuader to the quiet life. Trouble with his boys meant that Mr. Alsop was not in all respects a success; and the teacher, while forced to confess this fact to himself, did not wish it unpleasantly noised abroad. He was suffering for his own conscientiousness and keenness of perception; he knew Fowle and Archer as dangerous boys, while other teachers

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were still dull-witted or misguided enough to defend them.

One morning, as Mr. Alsop, thinking gloomy thoughts about the waste of himself which a talented man commits when he takes up the life of a teacher, swung sharply round the corner of his dormitory, he beheld a most exasperating sight.

Wally Sedgwick had been loafing in 7 Hale that morning, keeping both Sam and Duncan from work which neither wanted to do. Wally's hat lay on the window seat. Duncan, concluding that Wally had overstopped his leave, lifted the window and pushed the hat gently from its resting-place. Then he calmly informed Wally that his "dip" had fallen out. Both peered over the sill to see where the hat had fallen.

John Fish, in the room below, had caught sight of the object falling past his window, and leaned out to investigate. It occurred to him immediately that (as the physicians say) water was indicated; so he brought his pitcher and began pouring upon the hat. Duncan, observing this manœuvre from above, was seized with a bright

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idea. He too fetched a pitcher and poured his libation upon John Fish's unprotected head as it projected from the window below. It was this spectacle of pitchers and streams of water and heads and an all-suffering hat which greeted Mr. Alsop's gaze and outraged his sense of propriety as he emerged into view before the front of Hale.

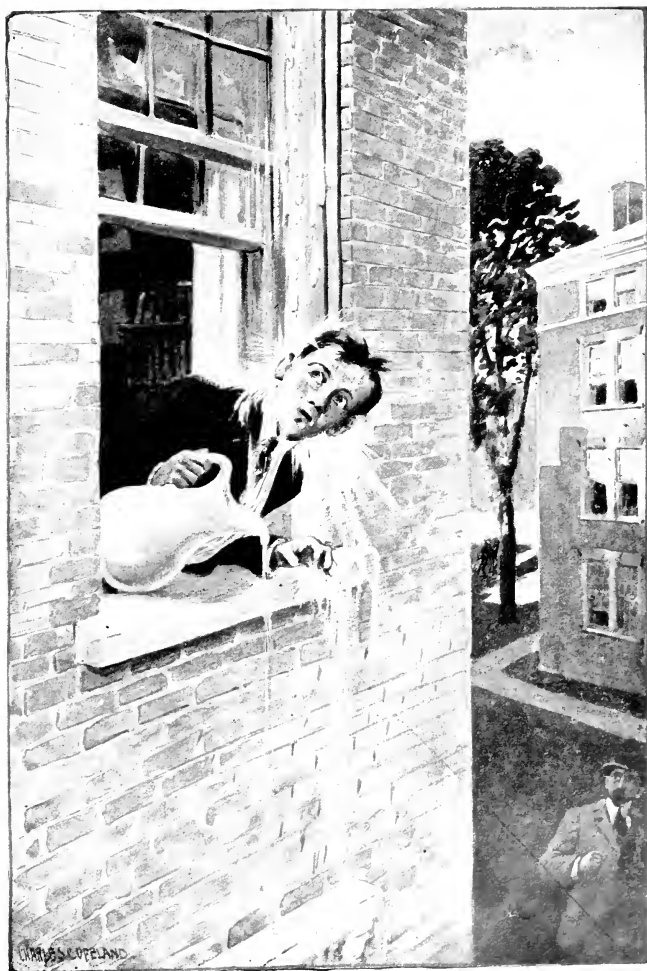
Fish did not pour long. The chilling grip of the water upon the back of his neck quickly reminded him that his conduct was unbecoming. Duncan stopped when Fish stopped, but neither before the teacher got a good view of the offenders.

"Gee, there's Alsop!" cried Duncan, jumping back into the obscurity of the room. "My name is mud."

"I guess I'll go," said Wally, quickly, "before some one pinches the hat."

Wally scuttled downstairs, dashed past the teacher at the door, seized his hat and sped away from danger. Mr. Alsop mounted directly to Number 7, and knocked vigorously. Sam opened the door.

"Peck, it was you who were pouring water out of your window upon the head of a boy below?"



THIS SPECTACLE OF PITCHERS AND STREAMS OF WATER AND HEADS GREETED MR. ALSOP'S GAZE. — *Page 164.*

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“Yes, sir,” said Duncan, promptly, “but it was in self-defence. You see, the hat fell out, and before we could get it, some one downstairs began to dump water on it. I had to do the same thing to him to make him stop.”

“I suppose there was no other way of stopping him,” answered Mr. Alsop, with angry sarcasm. “You knew very well that all throwing of water from dormitory windows is forbidden. I shall report you at the office as on study hours.”

“That’s a pretty note!” said Duncan in disgust as soon as the enemy was out of hearing. “Put me on study hours for that! It was nothing at all. Fellows do it all the time in Sibley and Wentworth and don’t get even a call-down. That’s a way to run a dormitory, isn’t it? He probably won’t do anything to Black Hand Fish!”

Therein Duncan was wrong. Mr. Alsop stopped on his way downstairs to give Fish the same punishment, but he did it with reluctance, in fact almost apologetically, and he took the penalty off at the end of a week. Duncan, being of a proud spirit and showing evident resentment in his manner, the instructor disciplined by a

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longer period of restraint. During this season of penance, when Duncan was at home morning, afternoon, and evening, cut off from all visitors, the two room-mates were inevitably much together. Some of this time Duncan wasted in maledictions on his unjust fate and on all those whom he held responsible for his sufferings; some he spent profitably in studying, and in getting acquainted with his room-mate. The experience of this period, which proved effectively the value of Sam's friendship, destroyed the last shreds of the prejudice which Duncan had nursed so long. He signalized his conversion by suggesting to Archer that it was time they addressed each other by their first names. He made atonement, not by falling on his friend's neck and beseeching his pardon for misjudging him, but by treating him with frank cordiality at home and commending him abroad.

"Black Hand" Fish, released from the ban at the end of a week with a gentle recommendation that he restrain his sprightliness, returned most subservient thanks and went his old way. Fish's old way was not a good one from the point of view

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of morality or of the happiness of his neighbors. He was the "bad boy" of the well, a natural Ishmaelite. His hand was against every one. He borrowed money without the slightest intention of paying; he rough-housed recklessly in the rooms of those not strong enough to eject him, smashed furniture, threw books, spilled ink, played hair-dresser with the shoe-brush. And withal, so strong was the code of honor among his victims, so suave and respectful was his demeanor toward Mr. Alsop, so craftily did he choose his hours of molestation, that the teacher had no suspicion of his character. When Mr. Alsop passed Fish's room on a visit of reproof to Fowle, and saw on the door a threatening demand for money emphasized by the drawing of a black hand, he reflected sadly upon the persecution which an orderly student must suffer at the hands of the disorderly. Indeed, he felt tempted to call a meeting of the well to protest against the cowardice of anonymous threats.

Fish himself was not greatly disturbed by the sight of these manifestoes. He was not to be frightened into disgorging by the threat of a

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Black Hand. When, however, a similar notice appeared on the blotting-paper on his desk, he began to suspect his long-suffering room-mate Moorhead, and made him the special object of his attentions. Moorhead was a studious youth, an honor man, very ambitious to keep his rank. Fish hid his books, poured away the water from his pitcher, pulled his bed to pieces, inked his exercises. A favorite diversion was to sing Moorhead to the verge of madness when the boy wanted to study. This was especially effective when a "dec" had to be learned, or lines memorized for English.

With the occupants of Number 7 Fish took no liberties. They "wouldn't stand for it," and they were capable of defending themselves. The weaker inhabitants of the well safeguarded themselves and their possessions as best they could by keeping their doors locked. Even with this precaution there were times when the pest found admittance. Being debarred from outside disturbance by the serious threats of the trio, he was in a way thrown back upon the rooms for amusement.

Spring came, if a muddy windy March has any right to the name of spring. Sam, whose reputa-

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tion was better with other teachers than with Mr. Alsop, sometimes got permission to go off with his gun. He returned one Wednesday night, empty-handed, as usual, but eloquent of the grandeur of the heavy surf as it broke over the rocks at the foot of Great Boar's Head. He wrote a theme on the subject before he went to bed, and read it to Duncan.

"Gee! but it must be worth seeing!" exclaimed Duncan. "If that beast of an Alsop hadn't put me on study hours, I might go down and get a look at it."

"Why don't you ask him to take you off?"

"Ask him to take me off!" repeated Duncan, indignantly. "I wouldn't ask him to take me out of a pit, if I were dying of thirst!"

"He probably wouldn't do it anyway," remarked Sam, recalling the humiliating refusal which he had himself received when he asked for a special make-up on French vocabulary.

Thursday and Friday the wind blew hard from the east. Saturday was clear. At nine, after his first recitation, Duncan came dashing in with the signals of exciting news flaming in eye and cheek.

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"Alsop's gone to Boston to-day to tell the Modern Language Profs how to do it. He won't get back until to-morrow night."

"What of it?" asked Sam, calmly.

"I'm going to take a holiday. I'm going to see the surf, that's 'what of it'!"

"You'd better not. You can't get permission; and if any of them see you, they'll report you, and it'll be all up with you."

"I'm not going to stay cooped up here all the time. I did nothing to be put on probation for, not as much as John Fish, and he was let off a week ago. I'm going to see the surf!"

"Supposing they see you?"

"They won't see me. I'll get something to eat early down at McLane's; then I'll take the one o'clock car outside the town. Nobody would leave as early as that, and if they do, Brucie, who's got permission to go, will take the same car in town, and signal me at the right place if there's any danger. Then I'll jump off at Leavitt's, skip over to the rocks, have a look at the waves, and take the same car back. I'll be here by three."

"It's risky," said Sam, thoughtfully.

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“I’ll take the risk!”

All that morning, Duncan’s foolhardy scheme troubled Sam’s mind. There was danger in it — a danger quite out of proportion to the pleasure to be gained. The boy who leaves town without permission goes permanently. That was a rule to which the faculty rarely made exceptions. It was useless to expostulate with Duncan; he had made up his mind, and the resolution of a boy who had studied the ins and outs of Academy discipline for four years could hardly be expected to yield to the objections of a newcomer. And yet there was an objection which appeared to Sam to be serious.

“What are you going to do about the two o’clock car going down?” he asked Duncan, as the chums came together again at twelve o’clock. “There’s sure to be some one on that who would recognize you; it will pass you at the power-house.”

“That’s easy!” answered Duncan, confidently. “I’ll duck down when we pass the cars, going and coming. If you’re trying to scare me out of this, you’re wasting your breath. I’m going, anyway.”

This ended Sam’s attempts at interference.

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He hung around the room for a while after Duncan had gone, then hunted up Dr. Leighton and asked permission to go to the salt marshes or elsewhere, shooting. Dr. Leighton knew Mr. Archer and believed in the boy. As a result, we may say by way of parenthesis, the boy believed in Dr. Leighton, and, what is more to the point, strove to earn his esteem by honest work for him. Dr. Leighton's permission was quickly obtained.

Sam boarded the two o'clock car in his shooting togs, without any clear idea as to his purpose. He didn't care much about shooting that afternoon, and he did want to help Duncan, but how he could help Duncan he had but the vaguest notion. If there were teachers aboard, he might engage them in talk at the critical time, and so divert their attention. Two teachers did get in at the square, Professor Towle and Mr. Snow, both elderly men above the temptation of spying — the fault of overzealous youth — but quite as rigid in their sense of duty as their younger colleagues. If Duncan showed himself, his head was forfeit.

The car bowled rapidly along the desolate,

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water-soaked highway. Sam left his seat and went forward with the motorman to catch the first glimpse of the waiting car at the turnout. As they bore down upon the power-house, they saw ahead of them a group of workmen gathered about a heavily loaded service car which appeared to have broken down, obstructing both main track and turnout.

"Looks like a block," observed the motorman, as he crowded down the brake.

"What will they do?" asked Sam, quickly.

"Probably swap passengers with the up car when it comes, and send us back."

The car came to a stop. The motorman opened the door of his vestibule and leaned out. Sam peered over his shoulder.

"You'll have to go back, Jim," said an official to the conductor. "Transfer your passengers."

Sam seized his gun, pushed by the motorman, and strolled along the track past the obstruction. As soon as he felt himself sheltered by the derailed car from the argus eye of the faculty, he jumped the wall, and in its shelter ran headlong for the curve round which the up car was expected.

CHAPTER XVIII

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Two minutes later a youth in khaki, armed with a gun, stopped the up car just around the curve beyond the power-house, called out a startled passenger, and let the car go on. Those who were curious enough to look back—including a shrewdly grinning conductor—saw the pair disappear over the fence into a clump of trees.

“What’s up?” demanded Duncan, as soon as his foot touched the ground.

“They’re going to transfer passengers at the power-house. Towle and Snow are there—” Sam stopped for breath; his run up the hill had winded him. “You’d have been caught like a rat in a trap.”

Duncan whistled, and gave vent to a variety of exclamations prompted by a variety of feelings. Sam cut into them abruptly.

“You can’t show yourself until after the car

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passes here. By that time the other one will have gone, and there isn't another for an hour."

"And some one is likely to be on that," said Duncan, gravely.

"Yes, and on the one after. If you want me to, I'll stay down and watch to see who's aboard, and give you a signal. Or —"

"Or what?"

"You might walk back. It's only five miles."

"In all this mud?" cried Duncan.

"It isn't so bad on the track; and it's the safest way. If any one sees you walking, it won't hurt, because you've got a right to walk where you want to."

"That's true," said Duncan. "Well, I guess I'll walk. What are you going to do?"

"I got permission for the marshes. I suppose I ought to go."

"Go ahead!" answered Duncan. "There comes your car. I'll see you when you get home."

Sam vaulted the fence, stopped his car, and got in. Professor Towle fastened on him a questioning glance as he sat down.

"We were wondering what had become of

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you," said the teacher, kindly. "You went on ahead?"

"Yes, sir," answered Sam, demurely.

"Rather unpleasant walking," remarked Mr. Snow, looking at Sam's muddy feet.

"I don't mind the walking," Sam hastened to say. "When you're out with a gun, you go through so much mud that a little more or less doesn't count."

"I suppose so," responded Mr. Snow. Professor Towle was thinking in a half-interested way that it was a queer freak for a boy to go ahead of a car on a day like this, and wondering vaguely what prompted the impulse. He did not wonder long. When one has been guessing more or less unsuccessfully at schoolboy conundrums for a quarter of a century, one gives up easily before a casual new one.

When Sam came back to 7 Hale that night, with game bag empty as usual, he found Duncan stretched out in an easy chair before the fire, arrayed in bath robe and slippers. His shoes, brown with mud and bleached at the tips with water, sulked, neglected, in a corner.

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"Been to dinner?" inquired Sam, as he opened the door.

"Not going," Duncan answered laconically. "When I got back about five, I was so dead hungry I couldn't wait for dinner, so I filled up at Mc-Lane's. You see I didn't stop for much luncheon this noon. I had a whopping big steak with two orders of French fried, and half a lemon pie. I sha'n't want anything more to eat this week."

"What do you think about it now; was it worth while or not?" Sam talked from his bedroom, where he was busy peeling off his soaked clothes.

"No, it wasn't," responded Duncan, slowly. "I didn't see much of the surf, and I came near getting into trouble." He waited a minute and added as an afterthought, "From one point of view it was."

"What's that — exercise?"

"No. I found out what a good fellow I've got for a room-mate!"

A thrill of delight ran through Sam's chilly limbs as he heard this unexpected acknowledgment. His own heart had long since declared itself. Yet an instinct of self-repression, inbred

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by many generations of Puritan ancestors, combined with the aversion to sentiment common to all boys, forced an almost flippant answer to his lips. "You'd better wait till the end of the year before you say that. Your opinion of me may slump."

"I've waited long enough — too long. You got me sour on you at first when you turned me out of my room; then the way you let Mulcahy work you, made me sore."

"I was pretty slow about Mulcahy," confessed Sam, "but that was partly your fault. I thought you were unfair to him, and that made me hang on to him."

"How did you come to go down there this afternoon?" asked Duncan, with an abrupt change. "You didn't say anything about going when I started off."

"I thought I might as well go," Sam answered carelessly. He shied at confessing the real reason.

"You saved my neck, all right," remarked Duncan. "I believe you went on purpose. I'm going to think so, anyway."

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Sam hurried his shower and his dressing and got over to dinner before the doors were closed. On his way back he stopped at Dr. Leighton's rooms to tell him that he had returned within the time set. Dr. Leighton invited him in, and they talked together intimately for an hour, not as teacher and pupil, but as friends. They fell ultimately upon the subject of injustice in the school life; of boys who trotted and cribbed and got C, while boys who plugged and were honest got E; of lies that secured immunity when the truth brought punishment; of Duncan Peck kept on pro for three weeks when Fish got off with one for the same offence; of the troubles of mischievous Birdie Fowle, who, though by no means a bad boy, was considered a monster, while others were thoroughly corrupt and yet enjoyed an immaculate reputation; of hypocrites who joined the Christian Frat because it would help them with the faculty, yet showed no respect for the principles of the organization. Dr. Leighton did not deny the facts of injustice; he did not undertake to absolve either himself or his colleagues from all mistakes in their estimates of the boys.

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But he did try to show that injustice is not intentional or permanent, that immorality and dishonesty are sure to work their way to the light of day and receive their reward; that no boy can escape the responsibility for his own character and influence. Sam went home feeling that his own unimportant life, if lived cleanly and honorably, might have a value in the school world.

Mr. Alsop returned Monday morning, his sensitive and suspicious soul agitated by a dire discovery. He had distinctly seen, as he walked along a Boston street on Saturday evening, Duncan Peck with another, unrecognized boy entering a theatre—Duncan Peck, whom he himself had put on probation, and who could not, save by misrepresentation, get leave of absence from any one. He went immediately to Peck's boarding place—Duncan had long since wearied of Alumni—to make inquiries, and learned that Peck had not been present at dinner Saturday night nor at breakfast Sunday morning. He visited the matron of the dormitory, and was told that the maid who had gone in to take care

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of Number 7 on Sunday had reported Peck sleeping soundly at nine o'clock, with shoes standing before the fireplace still wet, and muddy trousers hanging over a chair. Remembering the heavy downpour of rain which had occurred early that morning, Mr. Alsop felt that his case was complete. The rascal had broken his probation, had taken a six o'clock train to Boston Saturday night, attended the theatre in the evening, spent the rest of the night — no one knew how — and returned in fancied security by the paper train very early in the morning. It was a piece of tragic but most successful detective work. The circumstantial evidence supporting the testimony of his own eyes was complete.

Yet before he laid the scandal in all its appalling details before the faculty, Mr. Alsop decided to question Peck, and incidentally Archer. It should never be said that he had condemned a boy without a hearing. From Archer he expected no confirmation of his own true account of Peck's movements on that fatal night, for in accordance with the notions of loyalty prevailing among the students, a room-mate would feel bound to hide

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the facts, however heinous the guilt of the offender. Peck, of course, would not hesitate to lie, when he found himself trapped.

The two boys rose as the instructor walked solemnly into the room. He dismissed the offered chair with a wave of the hand and a chilly "Thank you," and entered straightway upon his business.

"Peck, I have come to ask you about your absence from town on Saturday," he began.

Duncan threw a look of dismay at his chum. "My absence from town!" he exclaimed, striving to appear wholly surprised, yet conscious of a traitorous blush suffusing his cheeks and a well-nigh irresistible inclination to avoid the instructor's stern eye.

"Yes, from town," repeated Mr. Alsop, with slow and distinct emphasis.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," said Duncan.

It would have been an interesting problem for a mediæval casuist to determine the moral character of this statement; whether a black lie, a white lie, or no lie at all. Duncan used it merely as a means of drawing the teacher out. He suspected

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that he knew only too well what the instructor meant. Yet, as a fact, he knew nothing. Mr. Alsop recognized it at once as the first of the expected chain of falsehoods, and sharpened his wits to detect its successor.

"Where were you on Saturday afternoon?"

"Knocking around," answered Peck, vaguely, sure now that he saw Mr. Alsop's meaning, and wondering how he had been found out.

"Were you out of town?"

Duncan was silent.

"Where were you in the evening?" went on the inquisitor, triumphantly. The weak line of defence was already breaking.

"Here," replied the defendant, puzzled to understand the bearing of the question.

"Are you quite sure, Peck?" said the questioner, solemnly.

"Yes, sir."

Sam stepped forward and opened his lips, "Mr. Alsop —"

He was interrupted by an uplifted hand. "I am questioning Peck, if you please." Sam retired, abashed.

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“Were you not in Boston Saturday evening, Peck?”

“In Boston!” Into this three-syllabled explosion Duncan compressed a heavy charge of wonder and relief.

“Yes, in Boston!” returned Mr. Alsop, with sharp emphasis. “You are doubtless an excellent actor, Peck, but please do not answer my questions with exclamations. Were you in Boston Saturday night or not?”

“Not!” replied Duncan, his eyes twinkling, and the corners of his mouth twitching in an incipient smile. He had recovered his self-possession completely.

“This is not a fit subject for jest, Peck.” Duncan’s face sobered immediately. “It is a very serious matter. I repeat my question once more and demand a frank answer. Were you in Boston last Saturday evening?”

“I was not,” answered Duncan, in a low voice, with his eyes fixed on the floor.

“It would be better to confess honestly than to persist in a lie, Peck,” continued Mr. Alsop, in a judicial manner.

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Duncan did not reply. His head was turned away.

"The fact is bound to come out, whether you admit it or not."

"What fact?"

"The fact that you were in Boston Saturday night. I saw you there with my own eyes just as you were entering the Colonial Theatre!"

Duncan drew a long breath, and waited an artistic interval before replying. "I suppose if you saw me —" he began.

"If I saw you, what, Peck?" prompted the teacher, gently.

"If I should confess, should I get off any easier?"

"I can make no promises. The faculty would doubtless give the fact consideration. You have been a long time in school."

"Why, he has nothing to confess!" broke in Sam. "He was here Saturday evening. I can testify to it."

To Sam's surprise, Duncan turned roughly upon him. "It's no use for you to say that. You'd better keep your fingers out of it."

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Mr. Alsop nodded approval. "I respect your desire to help your friend, Archer, but false testimony will only serve to hurt you without benefiting Peck."

This calm assumption that he was prepared to act the part of a false witness wounded Sam's self-respect and stirred his indignation. For the instant, however, he was dumb with astonishment. Before he could gather his wits to make protest, Duncan had turned away from Mr. Alsop and shot at his chum a beseeching look, emphasized by a vigorous side jerk of the head, that closed the boy's opening lips.

Again silence, broken by Mr. Alsop.

"It is better to make a clean breast of it, Peck," he said, in a persuasive voice.

Peck drew another long breath and lifted his eyes to the instructor's face. He had evidently taken a deep resolution.

"Tell me everything frankly," encouraged Mr. Alsop.

"I wasn't in Boston at all," declared Duncan, lapsing suddenly into a sullen manner. "I haven't been in Boston for five weeks."

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Mr. Alsop's face hardened. "You insist on that story, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"So much the worse for you, then. The faculty will consider the case on Tuesday evening. I will give you until that time to come to your senses."

CHAPTER XIX

UP THE WRONG TREE

MR. ALSOP closed the door of Number 7 behind him, more than ever convinced that he had caught an experienced and clever offender. Peck's confusion when suddenly taxed with an absence from town which he had supposed totally unknown, his theatrical attempt to bluff, his apparent conflict in mind over the wisdom of confessing and throwing himself on Mr. Alsop's mercy, his pains to keep an over-loyal roommate from committing himself to a falsehood, his final decision to abide by the original denial — all this was the natural behavior of a conscious culprit. The unfortunate boy had been given an opportunity to confess and gain a possible mitigation of penalty. The instructor's conscience was clear.

Inside Number 7 Duncan was dancing in transports of merriment. "Did you ever hear

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anything like it!" he cried. "Oh, but it's great! If some fool doesn't butt in and spoil it all before to-morrow night!"

"You're a fool yourself!" said Sam, in disgust. "Why didn't you let me tell him the facts? I could have cleared you."

"Because I didn't want to be cleared," declared Duncan, joyfully; "because this is the chance of a lifetime to get back at him for all his spying at keyholes and sneaking round. If you'd blurted out everything you wanted to say, you might have made him doubt, and I don't want him to doubt."

"Do you want to be fired for what you didn't do?" demanded Sam. "You weren't in Boston. You were here."

"I know I was here, but he doesn't. He'll bring it up before the faculty — and then! —"

"And then what?"

"He'll get a fall, a nice, hard, dizzy fall that'll make him see stars. He'll rise a better man."

Sam stared for some seconds and meditated. "I don't see why you're so sure about that," he said at length. "I'm the only one who can

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prove you were here. If he doesn't believe me, why should the rest?"

"You're not the only one!"

"Were you out that night? If you were, you broke your probation."

"I wasn't out."

"If you had fellows in here, you broke your probation just the same."

"I didn't have fellows in here. The laundryman brought my bundle and collected a dollar twenty. Better than the laundryman, Mr. Sedgwick came to invite you there Sunday night — I forgot to tell you about it."

Sam's face showed deep disgust. "You're a fine man to leave a message with, aren't you? Here it is Monday morning. They'll think I'm a chump!"

"Never you mind! She'll forgive you. You can go this afternoon and tell them how it happened. Maybe you'll get another invitation. Anyway, Mr. Sedgwick makes a second witness. Alsop might suppose I'd fixed the laundryman, but they'll have to believe Mr. Sedgwick. Then there's Don."

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"What has Don to do with it?"

"Sammy, you're positively thick. Who do you suppose Alsop really saw in Boston?"

"How should I know?"

"He saw Don!"

Then a light suddenly broke upon Sam's slow mind. He had met Donald Peck, Duncan's twin, on the morning of the Hillbury football game, and had been amazed at the close resemblance between the two brothers. Since then, various anecdotes of the pair, current in the school, had come to his ears, and Duncan himself had told him much about their experiences together.

"That's just what happened!" Sam cried. "Don came in from Cambridge to go to the theatre, and Alsop saw him. I wonder why he didn't think of Don."

"He wouldn't think of anything except that he'd caught me," said Duncan. "He wasn't looking for ways of proving me innocent."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. Oh, yes, I am! I'm going to telephone Don, and if he says he went to the

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Colonial Theatre that night, I'll get him to write me a letter."

The routine business of the faculty meeting on Tuesday had been disposed of. Petitions from various misguided students for an extension of the approaching spring vacation had been refused. It had been decided that the Mandolin Club might not give a concert in Haverhill, and that the Assembly Club under certain conditions might hold a dance on the evening of a certain Friday. The secretary was reading the alphabetical list of students to refresh the memories of those members of the faculty who had come to the meeting with questions to ask or charges to bring. Halfway through the catalogue of seniors, at the name of Peck, Mr. Alsop interposed.

"Stop there, please! Did any one give Peck permission to go to Boston on Saturday night?"

Silence effectually answered the question. "I thought not," continued Mr. Alsop. "He is on special probation. I was in Boston over Sunday, and on Saturday night, a little after eight, I saw Peck just entering a theatre on Boylston Street with a companion whom I did not know. As

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soon as I returned I made inquiries at his boarding place, and learned that he was absent from dinner on Saturday night and from breakfast Sunday morning. The chambermaid reported him in bed at nine o'clock on Sunday, his shoes standing before the fireplace still wet. There was a heavy rain early Sunday morning, as you perhaps remember. I am convinced that he left town by the six o'clock train Saturday and returned by the paper train Sunday morning. I questioned him about the matter and told him where I had seen him. He was confused in his answers, and at one time seemed on the point of confessing, but he finally decided to take the other course, and faced it out to the end." Mr. Alsop paused.

"If you saw him," said Mr. Moore, who was presiding, "I should say that it is a case for immediate dismissal."

"I saw him distinctly."

"Who is his room-mate?" asked Professor Towle.

"Archer."

"What does Archer say?"

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"Archer would probably pretend that Peck was in his room on Saturday evening. He was about to say something to this effect, but Peck, who evidently wanted to keep him from committing himself to a false statement, objected to his testifying."

"That seems a strange proceeding," remarked Professor Towle. "A boy who would run away from school for a night wouldn't be likely to care whether his room-mate lied or not as long as the testimony was in his favor."

"I should myself be very unwilling to believe either that Peck would leave town without permission or that Archer would lie about it afterward," said Dr. Leighton, for the first time taking part in the discussion.

"It is a question of fact, not of opinion," replied Mr. Alsop, tartly. "It might not seem to you so unlikely, if you had seen as much of the pair as I have."

"Might it not have been Donald Peck whom you saw?" asked Dr. Leighton. "He is in Cambridge, and might very well have been in Boston that night."

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The effect of this question was first to stagger and then to anger Mr. Alsop. In his zeal to bring the guilty Duncan to punishment, he had put aside all thought of error in identification. This reminder of the existence of Duncan's double came to him as a shock. He entertained the suggestion but a moment, however, dismissing it immediately as reflecting on the accuracy of his observation.

"I can only repeat," he said with frigid dignity, "that I saw Duncan Peck in Boston Saturday night. The suggestion that the evidence of my own eyes is not trustworthy will not explain his two absences from meals, nor the condition of his room on Sunday morning, nor his very noticeable confusion on being questioned."

"I am afraid we are spending time unprofitably," broke in Mr. Moore. "May I suggest that the case be left to a committee, with full power to dismiss the boy if he is found guilty?"

Professor Towle moved that Dr. Leighton, Mr. Alsop, and Mr. Snow constitute such a committee. The motion was passed and the august body continued its review of the list, putting six

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boys on special probation for an excess of five chapel cuts during the term, voting that notice be sent to three fathers that their sons must be withdrawn, ordering A. Jones to retire from the Assembly Club, and B. Brown to give up either French or German, and C. Smith to pay before Thursday for the damage done in his room or be suspended, — and so on for a ruthless hour of house-cleaning.

After his first recitation next morning, Dr. Leighton got to work on the task of his committee. He found Duncan and Sam together in 7 Hale. Sam retired at the suggestion of the teacher that he wished to talk with Peck alone.

“Was I fired?” asked Duncan, when Dr. Leighton had stated his errand. Duncan’s manner showed plenty of curiosity, but little deep concern.

“Your fate is in the hands of a committee,” replied Dr. Leighton. “If it is true that you were in Boston that night, I couldn’t keep you here if I would, and you may be sure that I should not try to do so. The question is one of fact. At present the presumption is against you.

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I want first your own word. Were you in Boston Saturday night?"

"No, sir," responded Duncan, promptly, looking frankly into the teacher's serious face. The boy's expression was serious too, except as to the eyes. In them gleamed but half suppressed a glint of fun.

"Where were you?"

"Here."

"Did any one see you here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who?"

"Sam Archer."

"His evidence might satisfy me, but not others. It is conceivable that a room-mate should feel in duty bound to defend his friend at the expense of a lie. Did no one else see you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who?"

"The man who delivers for Jetteau's laundry, a short, red-faced fellow. We call him Pete."

Dr. Leighton wrote in his book: "Pete, Jetteau's laundry." "I wish it had been a better witness," he said regretfully.

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"There was a better witness," said Duncan, his satisfaction now breaking forth into a broad grin, "Mr. Sedgwick."

Dr. Leighton closed his notebook with a snap. "Did he see you here?" he demanded eagerly.

"Yes, sir. He came a little before eight to invite Sam to supper the next day." Duncan's face took on a rueful look as he added, "I forgot to tell Sam until this morning."

"You ought to have given me his name in the beginning." Dr. Leighton spoke reprovingly, but with evident relief.

"Mr. Sedgwick came last," answered Duncan, demurely. "I was giving the witnesses in exact order."

Dr. Leighton laughed, a frank, natural, unprof-like laugh. "You always were a joker, Duncan, but take care how you joke with the faculty. Some of us don't understand jokes."

Duncan grinned in silent comprehension.

"But why didn't you tell this to Mr. Alsop?" pursued Dr. Leighton, now serious again. "It would have saved all this misunderstanding."

"He didn't give me any chance," said Duncan.

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"He spent all his time trying to make me confess I'd done what I hadn't done."

"But you prevented Sam from testifying."

"Yes, I did," declared Duncan, stoutly. "As Alsop was so sure I was bad, I thought he might as well find out the truth himself. I hoped it would come hard, for he's treated me dirty mean."

"How has he treated you meanly?" asked Dr. Leighton, quietly.

"Lots of ways. For one thing, he's kept me on probation three weeks for throwing water out the window, when the fellow who started the thing only got one."

"Go and get Archer," commanded Dr. Leighton.

"Was Peck here Saturday night?" asked the instructor, as the two boys returned.

"Yes, sir," answered Sam, eagerly. "He was here the whole evening from the time I came in a little after eight. We both went to bed about eleven. He was no more in Boston than I was."

"One thing more, Peck," said the teacher, turning abruptly on Duncan. "Where were you on Saturday afternoon?"

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Duncan's countenance fell. "Knocking around," he answered cautiously.

"That's indefinite. You were not at dinner."

"No, sir. I got my dinner at McLane's at about five."

"And before five?"

Peck hesitated, looked at his room-mate, then out the window, then at his room-mate again, and at last into Dr. Leighton's face.

"I'd rather not tell you; that is, officially. I'll tell you personally, if you like. I didn't do anything bad."

"Personally then, if it must be," said the instructor.

"I went to Hampton Beach to see the surf."

"What!"

"I went down on the one o'clock car and came back on it. I walked up from the power-house."

Dr. Leighton was silent, while Duncan shifted nervously from foot to foot, and wondered wildly whether he had made the great mistake of being confidential with an untrustworthy prof. Dr. Leighton, however, understood clearly the distinction intended; he had agreed to receive

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Duncan's confession, not as a member of the faculty, but as a friend of the confessor. Officially he could take no cognizance of the affair. He must speak as a friend and adviser, or not at all.

"Duncan," he said with slow seriousness, "in going to Hampton you were leaving town without permission just as much as if you had gone to Boston, as Mr. Alsop thought you did. That Mr. Alsop treated you unfairly, or that your visit was for an innocent purpose, is no excuse whatever for the act. You broke a rule on which the school wisely insists, and the punishment for which you well knew. In that you were totally wrong."

"Yes, sir," said Duncan, humbly.

"You understand that if your absence is discovered and the fact brought before the faculty, I cannot say a word in your defence?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now I want you to promise, and promise honestly, that for the rest of the year you will try to keep well within the school rules."

"I will, sir."

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“Good!” Dr. Leighton held out his hand, and turned to go. At the door he spoke again. “One more word of advice — as a friend. You have the advantage over Mr. Alsop in this Boston affair. Use it to come to a better understanding with him, and not to annoy him. Remember that there is a very weak spot in your own armor.”

When the teacher was gone, the two boys remained for a time in silence. Duncan’s malicious joy in the prospect of Mr. Alsop’s humiliation had given place to a serious mood. “Leighton’s a square man!” he said at length. “You’d do right for a man like him when you’d rather do wrong; while as for Alsop, why, you’d do wrong for him when you’d rather do right, just to spite him.” And therein Duncan Peck showed a knowledge of the essential traits of an inspiring teacher which is rarely possessed by school trustees.

Later in the day Mr. Alsop came to apologize for his error, and the interview left a pleasant impression with both participants. Duncan had special reason to be satisfied with it, as the instructor, to make amends for his false accusation,

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removed the annoying probation. Through Dr. Leighton's influence the special committee made no report to the faculty, and Mr. Alsop was spared the pain of an official verdict on his blunder.

CHAPTER XX

THE SOCIALIST

FOR a few days after Duncan's acquittal, Mr. Alsop seemed really to have profited by his lesson. It is no slight humiliation to make a theatrical charge of falsehood against two boys, and then be compelled to eat one's words in sack-cloth and ashes. The tale circulated among the students in a variety of versions, none of which was inferior to the truth in picturesqueness. Members of the faculty smiled significantly as they passed on the word that the committee on Peck would not report, even while they deplored their colleague's misfortune and expatiated on his devotion to duty. The discomfited instructor had to draw on his whole fund of self-esteem to save himself from confessing that some of his methods needed mending. As he treated Sam with unwonted consideration in recitation for the next

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few days, and Sam, as a result, made more conscientious preparation of lessons, it began to look as if Sam, at least, was to be the gainer.

Birdie Fowle was left alone to bear the weight of Mr. Alsop's particular suspicion, and Birdie dropped as naturally into trouble, as a fly into the milk-pail. Taylor and Sam, with Birdie, had one evening been enjoying a most exhilarating game of ball in Birdie's room. They used a baseball and a bat. Sofa cushions piled in the corner constituted the field. To hit the Harvard cushion was a base hit, the Yale cushion counted for two bases, the pillow with the girl's head on it three, and the S cushion a home run. To miss the cushions altogether was an out. The sport was great; the cries of the trio floated out through the open windows, and the floor trembled with the lunges of the players. Mr. Alsop, who had latterly resolved not to interfere with the boys in their rooms unless the disturbance was serious, growing impatient under the strain, tramped his study, nervously asking himself, with each crescendo from above, whether the time had not now come when he really must interfere. Then the

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noises ceased, and he went back to his work relieved.

The game was at its height when a knock at the door sent the guests scurrying to the closets. Poor Birdie, bound to obey the summons, tossed the cushions back upon the sofa, ran his fingers through his disordered hair, threw on his coat, and hurried to open the door. Without stood Brantwein with his basket of "hot dogs."

"You old fraud!" exclaimed Birdie. "I thought sure it was Alsop."

"You ought to be so glad it isn't that you'd want to buy me out," observed Brantwein, as he pushed in. "I'll sell you the whole stock for an even dollar."

"Come out!" yelled Fowle. "It's only Brandy!" The hidden players emerged. "Who wants a dog?"

"I'll give you a dime for three," offered Taylor. "That's all they're worth."

"They're the best I ever sold, specially fine breed of dog," returned Brantwein, seriously. "They're really worth ten apiece, but I'll let you have 'em for a nickel."

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"Hot?" asked Sam, thrusting his hand into the basket.

"Two hundred twelve degrees," answered the vender, as he pulled his basket well out of Sam's reach. "Don't handle the pups."

Fowle treated the crowd, and the three were soon munching the sandwiches and crying down their quality.

"How's socialism, Brandy?" asked Fowle, winking at his nearest neighbor. "I hear it's a back number nowadays."

"The socialists are the party of the future," said Brandy, solemnly. "The time is coming when the government will own and operate all railroads and public utilities, together with all mines and great industrial plants, and the product and advantages derived from the resources of the country will be enjoyed by the people, to whom they belong, not by the few greedy monopolists who sit with their feet in the trough at home — and send their fat-witted sons to Seaton Academy."

"Good!" cried Taylor. "That's me! But look here, Brandy, will the government run the

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hot-dog business too? If it does, where'll you be?"

Brandy threw at the interrupter a glance which was meant to express pity for Taylor's ignorance.

"Those that are qualified will hold the important positions, not those who have a pull. I shall be chief government inspector of hot dogs." Brantwein turned again to his main audience. "The United States is to-day fifty years behind Europe in the matter of socialism, but we're learning fast now. We must make a beginning with the coal mines and the great trunk lines —"

"That'll be bad for you," cut in Birdie. "You can't beat your way from Chicago to Boston, then."

"I shan't need to," retorted Brandy. "The state will pay for every man's education. Fellows like you, of course, the state won't waste much time on. You'll be used for road-menders and crossing-sweepers."

"Hear! hear!" cried Taylor, lacking for the moment a more effective reply.

"It will be another golden age, won't it, Brandy?" interposed Sam, "like that one Virgil

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tells about, when the pastures were speckled all over with sheep of different colors, each one producing wool of just the right tint, so that there was no need of dyeing it. All the lazy will become hustlers and all the crooks honest, and everybody will have what he wants to eat and go to the theatre every night."

"Once a term was more than enough for Duncan Peck," said the socialist, most irrelevantly. "That was a hot old bluff he put up on Alsop, wasn't it?"

"It was no bluff at all," answered Sam, warmly. Just then the door was pushed open and Fish lunged in, gave a general nod that was meant to include all present, and made a dive for Brandy's basket. The socialist proved quite able to defend his property. He met Fish's onset with a hard shove that sent the intruder into the desk, then picked up his stock in trade and made for the door. "I can't waste any more time on you fellows," he said. "Fish has come to make a rough-house and there are about twenty starved Alumni Hall boarders to be warmed and fed out of this basket. So long!"

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Fish took a newspaper from the desk, punched a hole through it, and proposed that Fowle wear it as a collar.

"Get out, won't you!" pleaded Fowle. "I don't want any rough-house here."

"We'll put him out, if you say so," offered Sam.

"No, don't!" expostulated Birdie. "That'll make a row and Alsop will be down on us. He'll go."

Sam and Taylor drifted home to save the balance of the evening. Fish seized the long-handled hearth brush which Birdie's mother, in the trustfulness of her heart, had sent to her son with admonition that he keep his fireplace tidy. "Let me brush your hair," urged Fish, advancing on his unwilling host.

"Keep away with that!" Birdie commanded, but Fish persisted. Each clutched the handle of the brush and struggled against the other, Fish to accomplish his purpose, Birdie to ward off the attack. In the fracas the stick parted; Fish retained the handle end, Birdie the brush.

"Now see what you've done, you hoodlum!" cried Fowle, indignantly. "Get out of here!"

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As Fish showed no inclination to yield to this order, Birdie threw wide his door, got inside his enemy, and with a hard buck, given suddenly and low, tried to rush him out the door. Fish caught by the casing, pulled himself back, and ultimately escaped, with a jeer of defiance, to the farther side of the room. Here Fowle attacked him again, and by superior strength dragged him to the door, where Fish by the skilful use of hands and feet once more blocked his opponent's game. By this time Birdie had undeniably lost both temper and caution. He grasped the interloper's wrist with one hand, his neck with the other, and twisting the wrist and pressing the neck hard between thumb and fingers, urged him to the door.

"Stop! stop!" cried Fish, quickly. "I'll go."

"I won't trust you," shouted Fowle. "I won't let up an ounce till you're outside that door!"

Fish stood not on the order of his going. Outside Birdie gave him a final push and paused, panting and dishevelled, in the doorway. Fish had hardly stretched his cramped neck and

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shaken out his aching wrist, when he suddenly lifted his head in an attitude of attention, and darted up the next flight of stairs. While his ascending head was still visible over the banisters above, the angry visage of Mr. Alsop appeared from below.

"At it again, Fowle! Disturbing the whole well for your own amusement, regardless of the rights of others and my repeatedly expressed wishes! There's a limit, I wish you to understand, even to my patience."

"Yes, sir," stammered the boy, "but this time it wasn't my fault."

"It never is, according to your statements," declared the instructor.

"What would you do if a fellow came into your room, tried to brush your hair with a hearth brush, broke your things, and refused to leave? You wouldn't stand round and let him rip the room to pieces, would you?"

"Who was it?"

"I can't tell you, sir."

"If you prefer to shield him, you can't blame me for holding you responsible. Whoever the

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others may be, you are certainly one. If boys trespass on your room, you should keep your door locked."

"I do, usually," answered Birdie. "Sometimes I forget."

"For the rest of the term you are on probation," continued the instructor, severely. "At the next faculty meeting I shall report your case and ask that a notice be sent to your parents that unless you can come back to live an orderly, quiet life in the dormitory, we do not wish you back at all."

Overcome by a deep sense of injury, Birdie next morning confided his troubles to Sam. In consequence, feeling that the fuel for Mr. Alsop's ire must have been provided by the ball game in which they had had a share, and grasping at a vague hope of bettering the condition of the luckless boy, Sam and Taylor visited the teacher and tried to deflect to themselves some share of Birdie's punishment.

"Which of you was the one that forced himself into Fowle's room and broke his fire brush?"

"Neither of us," said Sam.

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"But you both played with bat and ball in his room?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you may both write out for me before Saturday night ten pages of French. I ought to put you on probation, but I will reduce the punishment in consideration of your confession."

Sam and Taylor withdrew in gloom. "That's what you get for being honest!" groaned Taylor. "Write out ten pages! That means five hours' work!"

"And we didn't help Fowle any, either," commented Sam, sadly.

Sam was so depressed by the erratic course of school justice that he went over to Dr. Leighton's that evening and told him the whole story, in which Fish figured only as "a fellow in the well." Dr. Leighton listened with sympathy and gave what comfort he could. A certain amount of injustice, he said, is inevitable in our lives; when we can't prevent it, it is better to bear it bravely than to whine over it. Sam went home resolved to take his punishment without grumbling, and to hope for better things.

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After the boy left, Dr. Leighton drew out his catalogue of students and ran rapidly down the list to discover who belonged in the east well of Hale. At the name of Fish his pencil rested. "That's the black sheep," he said, as he put away the pamphlet. "I'm afraid he's not what Alsop thinks him."

CHAPTER XXI

HONK! HONK!

THE day after Birdie Fowle reached home for the spring recess, a letter arrived from the Seaton authorities containing a printed blank, filled in with an alternation of D's and E's. There was likewise enclosed a short note from the school secretary, giving the startling information that the boy's conduct in the dormitory had been so reprehensible that he would not be permitted to return except on trial from day to day; and that any further complaint from his dormitory master would be followed by immediate notice to withdraw.

The Fowle household was burdened with sorrow during the six days which Birdie spent at home. Mr. Fowle was taciturn and grave, Mrs. Fowle wept, and Birdie (properly named James), after a day or two of aggrieved expostulation, settled into a mood of deeply despondent fatalism.

HONK! HONK!

He knew that he was not a bad boy; he did not follow the evil ways of some of his schoolmates; he did not drink nor play poker nor run in debt nor cut recitations. Other fellows who did these and worse got off clear, while for a little roughhousing, much of which had been forced upon him by others, he was to be branded as a criminal. Of what use was it to try to be good, if he got the punishment of the worst? He might as well be bad and have the fun of it.

So Birdie returned to school, his ears still tingling with the stern warnings of his father and the tearful entreaties of his mother, his heart saddened by a presentiment of failure. He was like an unwilling soldier marching to expected defeat.

Sam and Duncan came back in a very different state of mind. They had spent the week at the Archers' in Portland, where Duncan, who was on his best behavior, by his deferential politeness and open-hearted cordiality made amends to the parents for his early churlish treatment of the son. The family were charmed with him.

"We are so glad to have had you here," Mrs.

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Archer confided to Duncan on the day of their departure. "We always like to know Sam's friends, and we have been interested in you since Sam first wrote about you."

At this Duncan looked a trifle conscious, and shot a swift glance at Sam, whose face was turned away. "It's very good of you to let me come," he said politely, trying to escape the unpleasant reminder of the past by dwelling on the agreeable present.

"He used to write us, you see," went on Mrs. Archer, smiling, "that he liked you, but that you had other friends and did not care for him. I knew it would be different when you got to know each other."

"Was the carriage ordered, mother?" broke in Sam, most abruptly.

"Yes, for two o'clock," Mrs. Archer rejoined, and turned again to her guest. "I was disappointed when Sam proposed to bring down Mulcahy, whom I did not know at all, and not you whom I had met and wanted to see more of. Is Mulcahy one of your friends, too?"

"Not a very intimate one," replied Duncan.

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"He must be a very remarkable young man." She addressed herself again to the uneasy Sam. "But you haven't said much about him lately, Sam. What has become of him?"

"Oh, he's around," answered the son of the house, unpleasantly reminded of the superlatives which he had used in his early letters in describing Mulcahy. "Didn't you say you were going to hand over some of that cake to take back with us, mother?"

"Katy's doing it up now. Shall I tell her to put in some strawberry jam?"

Mrs. Archer rustled out on her errand, leaving the boys alone. Sam picked up a magazine which lay on the table, and turned the pages of advertisements.

"I did treat you pretty rocky that fall term," remarked Duncan, as if their differences during Sam's first months in school had been the topic of conversation. "I acted like a mick."

"Don't think of it," returned Sam, without looking up. "I was a fool."

And this was all the reference ever made to their early disagreement.

Birdie Fowle's melancholy fatalism lasted about

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a fortnight. By the end of that time, having been successful in keeping his door locked and having received two C's on half-hour exams, he began to feel better. His old cheerfulness returned, and with it a measure of carelessness. Sam, who was trying to help him, had urged him to avoid John Fish and give the dormitory scourge no excuse for enmity. It was clear, even to our inexperienced young man, that Fish's cunning was not keeping pace with his effrontery. Success in deceiving his dormitory master had stimulated the fellow's audacity to the point of recklessness; sooner or later he would expose himself.

Birdie, though accepting readily this rule of conduct, was hardly capable of carrying it out. On April first, the day of fools, he was tempted and fell. It happened in this wise. As he started down toward the post-office after his morning recitation, he saw John Fish sauntering in the same direction a dozen yards ahead of him. Obedient to the advice of his counsellor to keep out of Fish's way, Birdie checked his own pace and trailed along behind. In front of the post-office stood a dozen fellows gossiping and looking out

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upon the street. When Fish was two-thirds across, Birdie's good resolution yielded in an instant to the inspiration of the opportunity. He opened his mouth, hardened his throat muscles, and forced out two harshly resonant syllables.

Birdie's "honk! honk!" was a masterpiece of mimicry for which he was justly famous. No one in school could perpetrate anything approaching it in effectiveness. Barney and Litchell had developed a fair imitation that would deceive the inexperienced; Fowle could frighten the elect. Fish, whose mind was intent on the question of how best to spend a certain expected check — if he repaid the money he had borrowed from various boys, he would have nothing left — gave a great clumsy plunge forward, like a startled dray-horse. His cap flew from his head; his books dropped from his hand. Safe at the curbstone, he turned to throw a malediction on the reckless motorist, and looked into Fowle's gleeful face.

"April fool!" sang Birdie, cheerfully.

The fellows on the sidewalk hooted. Fish went back to gather up his property. "You're

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a clever child," he said, smiling contemptuously. His look was more significant than his words.

In five minutes Birdie was aware that he had committed a sad error. Fish in good-nature was always a menace to peace; Fish offended would be an unscrupulous enemy. Disheartened, Fowle took his troubles again to Sam.

"You were a fool to do that," expostulated Sam. "I told you to let him alone."

"I tried to," mourned Birdie, "but it was such a slick chance!"

"Well, as long as you can keep him out of the room, it'll be all right. You aren't afraid to tackle him in the open."

"I guess not," returned Fowle, emphatically. "If I could get him outside, I wouldn't put up with anything from him!"

"Then if he gets in, order him out; if he won't go, tell him you'll hold him responsible for everything he does in the room, and get out yourself."

"A lot of good that will do! He'd plug the gas jets, pour water in the bed, write things on my collars, and spoil things generally. And if I stayed, he'd be likely to do something to make

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me mad, and I'd wade into him. Then rough-house, noise, and home I'd go."

It was indeed a hard problem that poor Birdie faced: if he defended himself against aggression, he committed *lèse-majesté* against Mr. Alsop by having a rough-house, and the sentence hanging over him would be executed; if he endured in patience, his possessions would be wrecked before his eyes; if he reported the facts, he transgressed the one law of which all schoolboys, good and bad, despise the breaker.

"Come down here the next time he gets in," proposed Sam, at length, "and let me go up and settle him. You can prove an alibi if anything happens, and I'm not on probation."

A fortnight passed. Sam, busy with studies and track practice, had ceased to think of Birdie as in immediate danger. Moorhead, Fish's unfortunate room-mate, had proposed to room with Sam the next year, and Sam, feeling that it would be better for him to live with the quiet, studious scholar than with some more lively but less helpful chum, had consented. The interests of the present and plans for the future absorbed his attention.

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He was gaining in French and in Mr. Alsop's esteem; he was really beginning to hope for a recommendation in the subject for the college preliminaries. Collins kept him encouraged in the hurdles. Unless some better man appeared, he seemed sure of a place on the track team as Fairmount's understudy. Altogether he felt satisfied with himself and at peace with the world.

But it is hard to keep at peace with the world, if the world makes unjust war upon one's friends. Fowle, returning to his room from Greek one morning, neglected to secure his door. He hadn't been in his desk chair ten minutes when some one pushed the door open, looked in, and cried, "Honk, honk!" It was Fish!

"Keep out!" called Fowle. "I'm on pro."

"That don't scare me," said Fish, as he shut the door behind him and sauntered across the room.

On the table lay the first sheet of a theme, neatly copied. Fish dipped a pen in the ink, and shook a blot on the outspread page.

"Oh, excuse me," he said. "I was going to correct it;" and he dropped another blot beside the first.

HONK! HONK!

"Look here, Fish!" spoke Fowle, sharply, "I don't want you here. Clear out!"

"You're not very polite," returned the visitor, unabashed, as he threw the pen, point downward, at the table, and picking up a couple of magazines and a book, began rearing a triangular steeple on the lamp chimney.

Birdie's ire was waxing. He felt that he could not control himself much longer. "Will you go or not?" he demanded hotly.

"I'll go when I get ready," answered Fish, watching closely to see how high Birdie's temperature was rising, taking care meanwhile to keep the table between them. He did not want to get Fowle into a dangerously pugnacious state; he merely wished to incite a good lively rough-house, in which the smashing of a few trifles would be unavoidable.

Instead, however, of reaching over the table for his tormentor or chasing him round it, Fowle took an unexpected course. He turned and walked out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXII

HOW THE FISH WAS CAUGHT

FISH stood gazing with stupid astonishment at the closed door for some seconds after the sound of Birdie's footsteps had died away. He was alone, with no check whatever upon his Hunnish craving for mauling and smashing. Yet mauling and smashing *in se* were not what delighted the heart of John Fish. He liked to stroll about a room when its occupants were at home, and goad them gradually into a destructive fray. He liked to do accidental damage under the eyes of the sufferers. In the corner near the door of Fowle's bedroom had once stood a handsome and solid chair. By sitting in this chair whenever he came in, by tipping it back on its hind legs and wrenching it and twisting it with silent disregard of the protests of its owner, he had at last brought it to complete collapse — of course, unintentionally. In the embroidered scarf which

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hung from the mantelpiece were two big scorch-rimmed holes; here he had accidentally held a lighted cigarette behind him as he stood in front of the fireplace. He had enjoyed himself in this room, but always in the presence of spectators. The pleasure of laying waste dwindled to nothing, if the victims were not on hand to expostulate and mourn. He really was at a loss what to do with his liberty.

While he was still ruminating, the door flew open and Sam Archer rushed in. The new-comer threw his coat into a corner, turned up his cuffs, and opened the door. Then he spoke, briefly and to the point, "Get out!"

Fish looked across the table into Archer's face and recognized there an expression different from that worn by the challenger to an amicable rough-and-tumble. He had no mind for a serious set-to with the vanquisher of the redoubtable boxer Runyon, neither did he wish to retire tamely before a mere threat.

"Get out yourself!" he answered. "It isn't your room."

"No, it's Fowle's room, and he wants you out

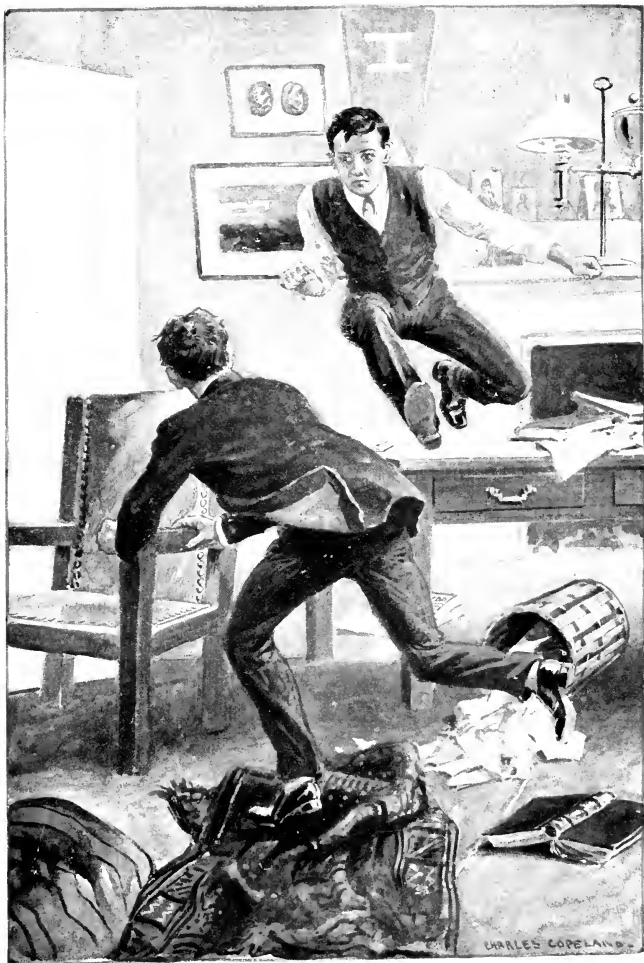
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of it. You know well enough that rough-housing will fire him. I'm here in his place. Now, beat it!"

"I'll go when I get ready," growled Fish in return.

They began circling the table. As Fish passed the door, he slammed it to. When Sam reached it, he opened it again and shoved a heavy arm-chair against it. Then he removed the lamp to the mantelpiece, and made another half turn round the table. This movement brought Fish near the door again. He stooped over to swing aside the arm-chair which kept the door open, and at the same moment Sam vaulted the barrier.

As Fish beheld his assailant's long legs swinging over the edge of the table in a hurdler's leap, and the sinewy body bearing down upon him, it flashed into his brain, and from his brain with instantaneous impulse into nerves and muscles, that by dodging the frontal attack and delivering an immediate rear charge, he could put Archer himself out of the room and close the door upon him. His dodge, however, was not quite quick



AT THE SAME MOMENT SAM VAULTED THE BARRIER. — *Page 228.*



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enough. The hurdler came down with long arms flying, and one of these flying arms, or the clenched fist attached to it, as it swung up, caught the ducking Fish under the eye. It was an unintentional blow, but it had force, and Fish went back against the door-post, for a moment dazed. When he got to his feet again, he found himself in the entry. The door was locked behind him; over the banisters he beheld the head of the descending Archer.

On the second floor at the foot of the stairs Mr. Alsop was standing, peering suspiciously upwards. "Another disturbance in Fowle's room, I judge," he said, frowning.

"I'll explain, sir, if you'll let me," said Sam, breathing hard. "Won't you come in here?"

He threw open his door and let the teacher pass in ahead of him.

"Now, what is it?" said Mr. Alsop, when they were inside.

"It's this," responded Sam. "Fowle has been trying his best to keep his probation and live up to the faculty's orders. This morning a fellow came into his room to stir up a rough-house,

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and Fowle, knowing that he couldn't keep out of it if he stayed at home, cut out and left the fellow there. He's over in the library now."

"Who is, Fowle or the fellow who came to rough-house?" asked Mr. Alsop, sarcastically.

"Fowle! He stopped on his way down and told me about it; I went up and —"

"And what?"

"Threw the fellow out," continued Sam. "I had to, or he'd have smashed everything in the room."

Mr. Alsop smiled with an air of incredulity. Sam drew himself up to his full six feet. The look of wounded self-respect that he flashed into the teacher's face was unmistakably real.

"I suppose you don't believe me," he said proudly. "If you will go to the library, you'll find Fowle there. He'll let you into the room, and you'll see my coat just as I dropped it."

"I have not said that I don't believe you. I do believe you," interposed Mr. Alsop, hastily. "You probably would not care to tell me who this intruder was?"

"No, sir, I couldn't," returned Sam. "I

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don't believe he'll come again," he added, looking ruefully at his knuckles, still numb from the blow which had felled the audacious Fish. "I didn't mean to say anything against anybody. I just wanted to have you know that Birdie — that Fowle — wasn't in it at all."

Mr. Alsop felt no disposition to discuss Fowle. Having frequently proclaimed the young man to be the pernicious influence in his domain, he did not like to acknowledge that he had erred. He therefore contented himself with repeating certain hackneyed sentiments as to the responsibility for order in the well and the offended spirit of the school, — and withdrew.

As far as his dormitory master was concerned, Fish certainly possessed a charmed life. When he appeared the next day with the darkly obvious marks of a bruise about his right eye, he had no difficulty in drawing upon Mr. Alsop's sympathies by his explanation of the flying ring which had struck him in the face in the gymnasium. It did not occur to the instructor to put together the fact of the black eye and Sam's account of the forcible expulsion of a trespasser.

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This example of the unique way in which order was maintained in his well, Mr. Alsop repeated with satisfaction to several of his colleagues, among others to Dr. Leighton.

"And you have no suspicion as to who this rough-houser was?" asked Dr. Leighton.

"None whatever."

"Have you noticed Fish's black eye?"

"Yes; he got that in the gymnasium from a flying ring. Bad bruise, wasn't it?"

"There seems to be a different version about that eye going round the school. They charge it up to some fracas with another boy."

"They would anyway," replied Mr. Alsop, sagely. "Boys always joke over a black eye. Fish told me all about it himself."

The comment on Dr. Leighton's lips remained unspoken. He had his own opinion as to Fish, formed from investigations which were not yet complete. He did not wish to hazard his plan by setting Alsop to pounding along the trail. If his suspicions were well founded, Fish would sooner or later betray himself.

Fish had grown incautious. Of late he had

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taken to keeping liquors in his room. He had found an excellent hiding-place, the pedal compartment at the bottom of Moorhead's piano. It was closed by a lid which swung down on hinges set at the lower edge. Moorhead came in one day just in season to find Fish closing the door of this borrowed cupboard.

"What are you doing to my piano?" he demanded sharply.

"Nothing, just seeing how it works."

Moorhead went straight to the piano, and opening the compartment, discovered Fish's two bottles and a glass.

"Do you call that nothing?" he asked, reddening with anger.

"Yee-up, I do," answered Fish, complacently. "The faculty might not."

"I don't want them there, do you hear?" announced Moorhead. "I don't want to be mixed up with the things at all."

"They won't do any hurt. Nobody ever opens the place."

"I don't care!" retorted Moorhead. "I won't have them there."

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"Oh yes, you will," Fish answered complacently, and went about his own affairs as if the matter were settled.

A few hours later Fish discovered his precious bottles on the floor in the back of his closet. He restored them to their appointed place in the piano, and lay in wait for Moorhead.

"You dirty little scut!" he shouted, as the rebel appeared. "Didn't I tell you to leave those bottles alone?"

"I said I wouldn't have them in my piano," faltered Moorhead.

"And I said you were to leave 'em alone. You might as well have handed 'em over to Lady Jane while you were about it. If you touch 'em again, you'll find your pretty music box there scratched from top to bottom."

And Moorhead, who knew what Fish was capable of, gave heed to the threat and held his tongue.

It was not long after this that slow-moving justice at last overtook Mr. John Fish. One morning when Moorhead was just starting for breakfast, he noticed that the lid of the piano

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compartment was down. Feeling under no obligation either to replace the lid, or to remove the chair which screened it from the casual observer, he took his book from the top of the piano and went his way. At the clang of the first chapel bell, Fish crawled forth from bed and for the next seven minutes devoted his energies exclusively to the task of throwing on his clothes and getting into chapel before the second bell ceased to ring. He had no leisure to waste in idle contemplation of his study.

The chambermaid, making her rounds, observed the bottles and called the matron. The matron came, closed the lid, and reported to Mr. Alsop. Mr. Alsop, scandalized and incredulous, made an examination of the premises and demanded an explanation separately from each occupant of the room. Each disclaimed ownership of the bottles. Fish declared, in addition, that he did not even know that there was any such cupboard in the piano; Moorhead acknowledged that he knew that the bottles were there, but would give no information as to their owner. As the piano belonged to Moorhead, Mr. Alsop

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was inclined to hold him either the criminal or an accomplice.

But this time the truth proved stronger than the lie. When the matter came before the faculty, every individual teacher to whom Moorhead recited conducted himself like an attorney engaged to defend him. After Dr. Leighton brought forward the report of his investigation into Fish's manner of life, the august body voted that Fish be dismissed; and the yea vote was so overwhelming that Mr. Alsop did not venture to raise a dissenting voice. The evidence that came to light a few days after the disgraced student left town, evidence which showed that Mr. Alsop had been shamelessly imposed on since the beginning of the year, was a severe blow to that gentleman's self-esteem.

CHAPTER XXIII

LESSONS IN HURDLING

WITH the departure of Fish, the east well of Hale ceased to be a scene of mysteriously fomented disturbance. Mr. Alsop, having been wofully betrayed through blind following of his own prejudices, resolved to be more cautious in forming opinions in the future, and less hasty in the performance of duty. He had yet to learn that a teacher may make a reputation in a week which he cannot live down in the whole subsequent school life of his pupils.

For Sam now began the busiest, most exciting period of the year. The college examinations were near enough to render devotion to lessons a matter of personal advantage; the outdoor school meet and the track contest with Hillbury challenged his zeal and ambition. Besides these serious interests, May and June offered their usual lavish opportunities for innocent but dis-

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tracting amusement, ranging from tennis and scrub ball games and long walks, to the convention of wags, wits, and philosophers, which gathered every pleasant evening after dinner on the high steps of Carter, and intermittently sang songs and discussed men and things — mostly men — to the vast entertainment of the listeners. Here Brantwein, released for the time from the burden of the peanut basket, was a protagonist, with socialism as a general theme and every exposed head as a target for his verbal shillaleh. The crowd yelled applause for every crack he gave, and lavished double measure on every telling return.

Good practice in the high hurdles amounts to something more than daily exercise in starting, running, and jumping. The course is one hundred and twenty yards over ten hurdles, with fifteen yards clear before the first, and fifteen more after the last. Between each pair of hurdles lies a distance of ten yards; each barrier is three feet and six inches high. The runner must clear the barrier in such a way as to interrupt his advance as little as possible, by rising neither too high

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nor too low, by taking his jump neither too long nor too short, by landing in the right position, by adjusting his inter-hurdle strides to the distance and to his own powers. It has been known since the race was first practised that the average man must take three strides between hurdles; but the length of the jump, and the proper arrangement of short and long strides, are even now matters of dispute.

Collins's theory, which of course Sam followed, was that the jump should be short rather than long. He insisted that to prolong the distance covered while in the air on the force of previous effort is to cut short the opportunity to use the legs; to overjump is to introduce into the race a series of dead periods when the runner is passively waiting for his feet to touch the ground before he can become active again. So the trainer labored with Sam to bring him over the hurdle to the ground at the earliest possible moment; to teach him the quick rotary whirl of the legs that neither drags nor interferes with the step, the forward leg doubled and slightly swung, the other brought quickly around after it in a wide arc; to force

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him to take the landing step short — in order to bring his feet under him — and to stretch the other two strides. Sam's handicap was his slowness and a tendency to make his strides too long. His advantage lay in staying power; he could do twelve hurdles as well as ten. So the clever trainer worked him day after day on starts and over two or three hurdles, and once a week sent him over eleven.

"You don't put me over the course enough, it seems to me," complained Sam, one day. "I'm tired of that everlasting thirty-five yards."

"If you can do two hurdles right, you can do ten," answered Collins, calmly. "If you can't do the first two, you can't do any."

"I should say that it's speed between that I lack," pursued Sam. "I get over the hurdles pretty well, but I lose momentum somewhere between jumps."

"You take your first step too long, as I keep telling you. Four to five feet is all you ought to cover in that first stride after the hurdle. If you come down right and take the first step right, you can put speed into the other two and get just

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the right take-off to drop you over the next hurdle. Speed will come in time."

"I wish it would!" lamented Sam.

"It isn't all in fast running," said Collins, "nor half. Taking the hurdles is the main thing. There's really only two running steps between, if you throw out the short step. And what a fast runner makes in those two steps, he'll more than lose on the hurdles, if he doesn't do 'em right. Three feet lost on a hurdle is thirty feet on the race, a good second and a fifth. No one wins a race by that much. The work that's cut out for you is to get your jump so near perfect that you don't lose anything in going over. Then just steady, hard running will put you ahead of the fellow who hasn't your staying power."

"We all seem to have about the same amount of that."

Collins hesitated. His first impulse was to deny Sam's statement; his second to let it go unchallenged. After all, there was nothing so important for Sam's progress as that he should continue to think that everything depended on hard, steady work. Sam was one who could

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stand work. While he was occasionally discouraged, he never became despondent; he did not grow irritable under defeat nor refractory at criticism. He disclaimed high expectations, smiled at discomfiture, and plodded on.

The school meet came and went, bringing little glory to the name of Archer. That Fairmount would beat him in the hurdles, Sam fully expected. The start was fairly even, but Fairmount was in the air above the first hurdle when Sam was leaving the ground on his first spring; at the fifth Fairmount was yards ahead. Yet at the tenth, strange to say, Sam had almost caught him. Archer finished less than two yards behind the leader, and fully six ahead of Sanderson, his nearest pursuer. Fairmount's time was sixteen and four-fifths. So Sam, according to Collins's estimate, had come close to seventeen seconds, a gain of at least a second by a year's work. From this result, with which the trainer was fully satisfied, Sam was at least inclined to draw more consolation than discouragement. He had still another school year before him.

It was his defeat in the pole vault which caused

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him the most chagrin. Jones, of course, rose like a bird soaring against the wind; his light, lithe body arched the rod gracefully at ten feet, six. Sam surmounted nine feet, six — but Mulcahy reached nine feet, ten. It was not jealousy that beset the defeated vaulter, nor wounded pride, nor the mean ill-will that grudges success to a rival. Sam's heart had harbored only feelings of congratulation towards Fairmount, who had beaten him in the hurdles; his enthusiasm over Jones's achievements was genuine and whole-souled. These two were sportsmen through and through, to whom the joy of the contest, the delight of winning, the promise of gaining points for the school in the meet with Hillbury, constituted the whole stimulus and reward. Mulcahy cared for none of these things. At heart it mattered not two straws to him whether the blue or the red triumphed, as long as his own advance was assured. To Mulcahy, athletics were but a ladder by which he could mount, the means necessary to a desired end. He wanted prominence in school, distinction, prizes. He wanted the Yale Cup as the crowning honor of his school

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career. To win this, he professed an enthusiasm for athletics, as the unscrupulous politician professes the principles that win votes.

Ten days later Sam took part in his first contest with Hillbury. In the interval he did some work in preparation for the event which is not set down in the coaching directions. When Collins received from the secretary of the Academy the list of those whose work was "up" and who were therefore allowed to compete, the names of Fairmount and Chouder were missing. There was a hurried consultation with the faculty, resulting in the announcement that if the backward work were made up to the satisfaction of teachers by the day before the games, the prohibition on the two men would be removed. Bruce called upon Mulcahy, who was known to have had experience in tutoring. Mulcahy could not possibly find time for extra work. Then Sam undertook the case of Fairmount, and Moorhead volunteered to coach Chouder. Both tutors labored early and late to bring their charges into a condition acceptable to the authorities. Moorhead had the more difficult task, for Chouder was behind

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in two subjects, and learning came harder to his slow, unreceptive mind than chopping wood or running races to his sinewy body. It was Moorhead's first opportunity to do something tangible for the school athletics, and he gave the best that was in him, freely and patiently, hour after hour, oblivious to the fact that there could be no public recognition of his service, no personal glory in victory. Fairmount triumphed over his geometry with a C, while Chouder, to his infinite satisfaction and the relief of his anxious tutor, scraped through his examinations on a brace of D's.

So it happened that Moorhead, as he perched high on the cheering section at the Hillbury games, felt that he had more part in the contests than those who sat about him, mere longing hearts and vociferous units in the chorus. When Chouder took the two-twenty yards from Merton of Hillbury, running from the start like a predestined victor, Moorhead thrilled with the consciousness that it was in part his race and his victory. In the low hurdles his candidate was not so successful, as the redoubtable Kilham of Hillbury led at the

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finish, though Chouder pressed him hard. Fay and Shirley had to content themselves with second and third places in the hundred yards, but Bruce won the quarter in a grand burst of speed that cut the time down close to fifty seconds, and Weatherford made sure of the half-mile. Jones sailed deftly over the vaulting bar at ten feet, seven, with Mulcahy a safe third at nine feet, eight. And old Brandy Brantwein, feeling unusually free from the trammels of society by reason of the absence of the peanut basket, showed what socialism will do for a man by throwing the hammer four feet beyond the best cast of the Hillbury individualist, and putting himself into second place in the shot contest.

The general issue was already decided when the high hurdles were called. Seaton had won. Under the inspiration of victory, Sam felt that he, too, might achieve something worth while. His start was good, but at the second hurdle the two outside men, Kilham and Fairmount, were already ahead of him. At the fourth they were still farther ahead, but he pressed steadily on, clearing his hurdles by two inches, dropping short

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and driving himself forward with the routine pace. At the seventh hurdle only Kilham kept his distance; Fairmount was nearer. The tenth he passed at Fairmount's side, with Kilham but a stride beyond. In the finish, Fairmount sprinted better and gained a yard, but was still behind the leader by the thickness of his body.

"If you hadn't coached up Fairmount so that he could pass his condition, you'd have been second in that race instead of third," remarked Duncan, as they discussed the events of the day, after the celebration.

"And we should have lost one point," answered Sam.

"One point wouldn't have made any difference in the result. You deserved second, anyhow, by the way you've worked. Fairmount will be gone next year, and then you'll have things your own way."

"There's Kilham," said Sam, wistfully. "He's only an upper middler. He'll be in Hillbury next year and beat me out again; then he'll go to Yale and I to Harvard, and he'll beat me four years more. That's what I'm up against!"

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"Oh, cheer up!" returned Duncan. "You've improved a lot this year. You may beat him all to pieces next year. They said that your race to-day was in mighty good time, and you weren't much behind Kilham."

Sam shook his head with a smile of resignation. "I haven't won a thing this year, and I probably shan't do any better next, but I'm going to keep right on. I'm too much used to losing to mind, and there's always a chance that by a fluke I may win something."

"It's a shame!" thought Duncan to himself. "I'd never coach a fellow up just so that he could take a prize from me, if the school never won an extra point."

CHAPTER XXIV

ROBERT OWEN, FRESHMAN

ON the Monday following the Hillbury games, Duncan rushed in with a letter in his hand, and an eager look on his face.

"Look here, Sam! Bob Owen's sent me two tickets to the Harvard-Yale Freshman ball game on Wednesday. Do you suppose they'd let us off to go?"

"Who's us?"

"You and me."

Sam's eyes sparkled. "Wouldn't it be great! Good seats?"

"Right behind the back-stop. Just think of seeing Owen bucking against McPherson and Hayes! O'Brien, who used to pitch for Hillbury, is going to be in the box for the Harvard Freshies, and several old Hillbury men are playing with Yale. It's a queer jumble; Seaton catcher and Hillbury pitcher against a mixed mess, — half of them old Seaton and Hillbury fellows."

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"I shouldn't think you'd care much who wins," observed Sam. "You've got friends on both sides."

"I do care," answered Duncan. "I'm with the Harvard lot every time, and you are, too, only I've got more reason for my stand than you have. It's Don's class and Bob Owen's class, and old Bob's captain."

"Well, I hope his nine will win. The Yale fellows beat 'em in football, didn't they?"

"Yes, and Bob was on the eleven. He's aching to get back at them. It'll be a hot old game, all right. The only question is whether we can break away to see it. Who's the most likely prof for you to tackle? You'll have to get the permissions. I haven't a pull with a single man in the faculty, worse luck!"

It was decided that Sam should try to win Dr. Leighton to the cause, and through the strong influence of the teacher float Duncan's uncertain craft across the bar. Duncan suggested various subtle methods of appealing to Dr. Leighton's favor, but Sam preferred a simple, straightforward course, — which was unquestionably the best one. He called on his patron saint of the faculty that

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afternoon, explained to him with eager enthusiasm the special opportunity which had been offered, urged that neither had had out-of-town leave for a long time, and promised, if they were allowed to go, not only exemplary conduct while absent, but compensation in diligent work on their return. Dr. Leighton smiled a little mournfully at this conception of diligence in school work as a favor granted to a teacher, and promised to think the matter over and do what he conscientiously could. Sam departed, greatly encouraged.

Two circumstances counted in favor of the boys' request: the fact that the invitation came from Robert Owen, for whom Dr. Leighton cherished a sincere regard, and his full confidence in Sam. He believed, moreover, that an honest petition for a legitimate purpose from an honest boy should receive at least as much consideration as some fictitious excuse of necessity trumped up to satisfy a formal rule. More than once, as he was sadly aware, had A's candid request been refused by the authorities, when B, who followed with a lie on his lips, obtained a permission which was used for precisely the same purpose. Dr.

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Leighton's commendation carried weight at the office.

They boarded the eleven o'clock train, jubilant in spirit as any schoolboy released for a lark, but self-contained as conscious Seatonians, who pride themselves on being above the "kiddishness" of minor schools. In Boston they snatched a hasty lunch and took a car for Cambridge. The car filled quickly. The Harvard track meet was to be held in the Stadium at the same time with the Freshman game on the ball field, and many outsiders were tending Cambridgeward. On Boylston Street a large, serious-faced young man climbed upon the running board of the car, and looking calmly over the crowded seats to spy out an unoccupied place, winked solemnly at a familiar face.

"Look, there's old Brandy!" exclaimed Sam, nudging Duncan sharply in the ribs. "How did he get here?"

"How does he get anywhere?" retorted Duncan. "On his cheek, of course."

Brantwein swung himself along to the seat occupied by Sam and Duncan. He was dressed

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in his best, and carried himself with a noticeable air of importance.

"Going out to the game?" he asked coolly.

"Yes, are you?"

"I'm going to something, I don't know what. Either the track or to see the freshmen play."

"How did you get off?" questioned Sam.

"I had business in Boston."

"Buying peanuts?"

Brandy smiled. It was his regular armor-plated smile against which all personal jokes fell dead and harmless. "No, buying a peanut farm and a burying-ground for fools. I've got to lay out about a dozen up there at Seaton before I leave. You fellows are feeling lively to-day."

"Yes, we're going to see Owen beat Coy again."

"Do you expect to see that?"

"We hope so."

"I don't know but I'll go there, too," said Brantwein, meditatively.

"You may not be able to get a seat now."

"I don't care about seats."

The three approached the entrance to the

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grounds together, but there in the crowd Brantwein disappeared. Our friends gave little heed to the movements of their eccentric schoolmate, being taken up with the pleasant excitement of the quest of places. Duncan hailed several fellows whom he knew, and pointed out several others whom he knew about. While they were waiting for the nines to appear, with Duncan still busy over his search for familiar faces, Sam's eyes fell upon a well-known figure seated on one of the benches reserved within the side lines for coaches and old players.

"Look there, Duncan," he cried, "on the first bench on the side line! Isn't that Brandy?"

"As sure as guns!" returned Duncan. "How did he get there?"

"Search me!" returned Sam. "He has the most colossal nerve! He told me once that with a two-foot rule in his hand he could get into any building going up, — construction work, he called it, — even if a man stood at the door to keep people out. Perhaps Owen let him in."

"Owen nothing!" retorted Duncan. "He's worked one of his bluffs on the ticket-taker.

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One of these days his nerve'll carry him inside a jail." Duncan did not fancy Brantwein, even as an amusement.

But the players were appearing, and Brantwein and his arts were forgotten.

"That's Owen, the solid fellow with the white sweater, and the mask on his arm," cried Duncan; "and the tall fellow behind him is O'Brien, the Hillbury man. The one just going out to left field is Latter. He played on our nine last year."

He paused to watch the men taking their positions for practice.

"There come the Yale fellows!" exclaimed Sam, whose gaze was wandering over the field. "Now, which is McPherson?"

Duncan hesitated for some time; the unfamiliar uniforms confused him. "I think that's McPherson over by third base," he said. The man at third took a short bound and shot it underhand to a companion. "Yes, that's Mac. I should know that twist of the shoulder in California. Isn't it a shame!"

"What?"

"Why, that he should be playing under Coy

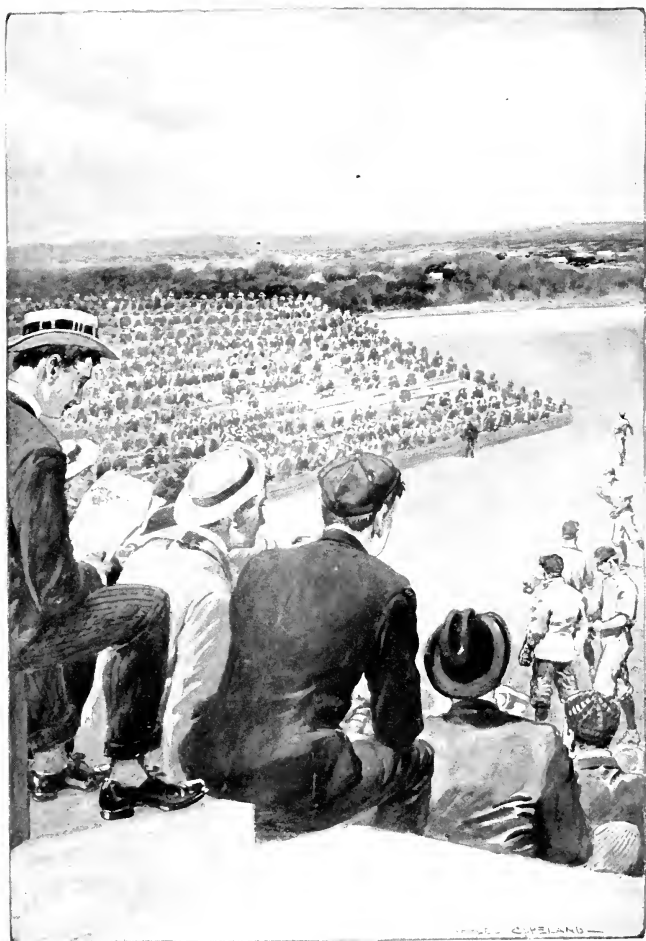
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against Bob Owen. In the Hillbury game last year Coy came near assaulting Mac for tagging him too hard at second. Now they're pals."

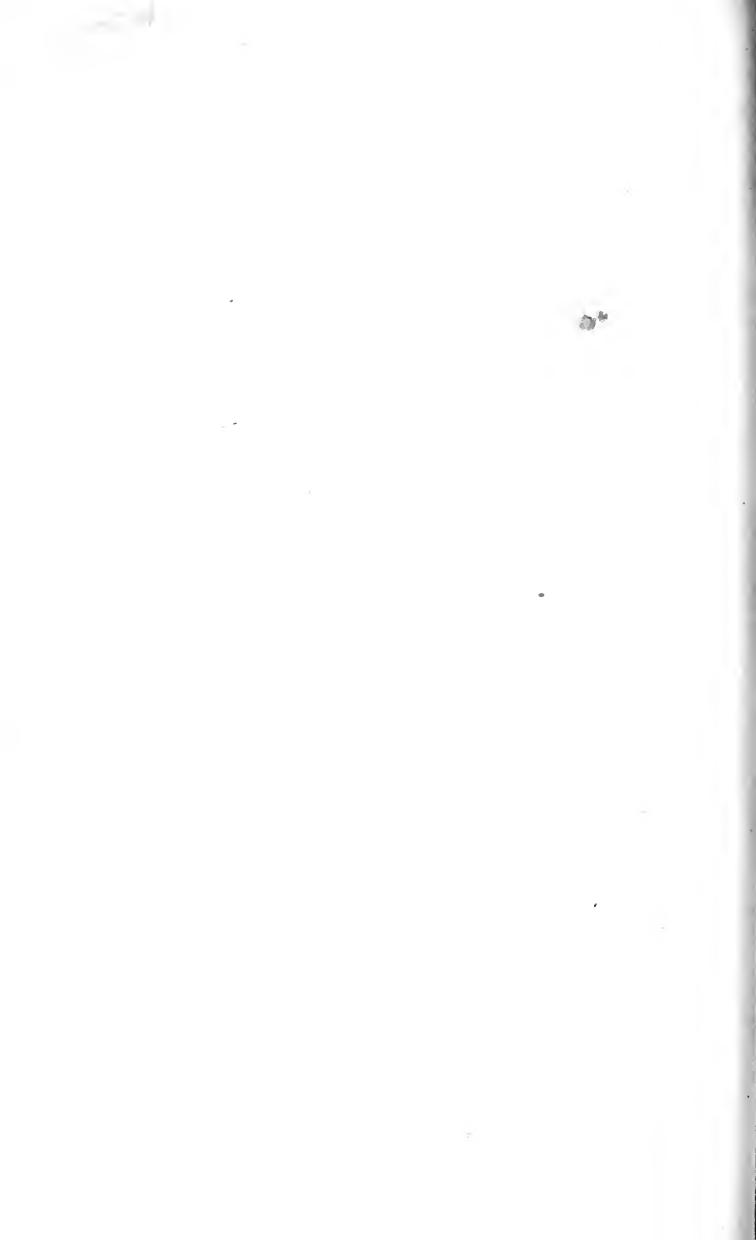
"I don't see anything strange in that," rejoined Sam. "He's playing for his college as Owen's playing for ours."

So they chattered on, till the Harvard men took the field for the game and a businesslike pair of blue-stockinged legs appeared beneath a bat at the plate. Then they watched with straining eyes, their talk running to brief exclamations, sighs for the discouraging gains of the visitors, vain cries of exultation when the Harvard men made promising plays.

Three innings passed without a run on either side. Then Coy, the first man up in the fourth, hit a bounder which the Harvard third baseman found too hot to handle, and Coy beat the ball to first base. The next man waited while O'Brien tried to tempt the runner to steal, and thus got his base on balls. His successor hit to third again, and while Manning hesitated and tried to touch Coy, likewise made first. Number four went out on a long fly to right field, but the speedy Coy



"THAT'S OWEN." — Page 255.



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got safely across the plate on the return throw, with score number one. McPherson now made a lucky single over shortstop's head, which brought in a second run. Then O'Brien caught the Yale man playing off too far from second, and the next batsman struck out.

"Bad!" said Duncan, sadly. His unhappiness was not relieved when the three Harvard men went out on a fly and two easy infield hits.

"They're finding the ball, anyway," remarked Sam, trying to be courageous; "the game's young yet."

"It's nearly half grown," rejoined Duncan, gloomily; "and you can see what kind of a beast it's going to be. Two runs is an awful handicap."

He was depressed still further in the fifth inning, when the first ball pitched yielded a hit that put a Yale man again on first. The Yale coaches took a risk and bade their man steal second. It was a poor risk, for Owen shot one of his perfect throws down ahead of the runner, and Williams, the Harvard shortstop, thumped him with the ball as he slid gallantly into his fate.

"What a daisy throw!" cried Sam, ecstatically.

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"He can do those by the dozen," remarked Duncan, airily. "He has a special wire to second base."

Manning now captured a foul off third, and Latter took a long fly in left field. A Harvard man got as far as second base and was left there. The sixth inning profited neither side.

The seventh began with another shock to our friends' nerves. Bryant made a two-bagger. His two successors, however, went out on hits to O'Brien, and presently Bryant himself, working too far from his base, was cut off by a sudden throw to second, and run down ignominiously between second and third.

"Now, Mr. Owen, do something!" muttered Duncan, as the Harvard catcher came to the plate. Owen responded to the unheard appeal by a hot bouncer over second which the Yale centre fielder allowed to bounce past him, thus helping the runner to second. Williams drove a troublesome ball into McPherson's hands, and while the old Seaton second baseman was struggling to get hold of it, Owen reached third and Williams crossed first. The Harvard freshies now tried

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a squeeze play, and Manning not only met the ball, but made a pretty little hit over Bryant's head, that would have brought Owen in, if he had not already crossed the plate. A sacrifice now advanced Williams and Manning to third and second. Then Gooding, the Yale pitcher, got three balls on his first three pitches to Silverton, and the Harvard man, waiting for his good one, drove a long single out between right and centre fields that let in Williams and Manning with scores two and three. Two easy outs followed.

"Three to two!" cried Sam, joyfully. "Two more innings!"

"It's too close for comfort yet," said Duncan, nervously. "I'd give a month's allowance to see the game end now. That's Coy up, isn't it?"

But Coy swung three times in vain at his old pitcher's curves. One of his successors reached first, but two others went out and left him there. The Harvard men fared no better.

"Three more outs. It ought to be dead easy," muttered Sam, as the ninth began. The first Yale man at the bat drove a ball into left field

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that looked good for two bases. But Latter got in front of it and sent it in to second in season to scare the runner back to first. A big bony chap followed at the plate.

"That's Kleindienst. He used to play with Hillbury. He can hit. They're going to do us right here. I feel it in my bones." Duncan jerked out his words in curt explosives. "There! he's done it!" he groaned, as the batsman drove the ball in a long sweep over third base.

"No, it struck outside the foul line!" cried Sam, eagerly, as the applause on the Yale side died suddenly away. "See! he's gone back to the plate!"

"And got a strike for it, too," said the reviving Duncan. "That's where the foul strike rule hits 'em."

While he spoke O'Brien sent in another pitch. Kleindienst hit another foul. This time the ball careened over towards the stands opposite first base. Owen tipped off his mask and ran headlong in pursuit. He took the descending ball with hands outstretched; and while the howl of applause was yet at its beginning, he turned sharply

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and threw to first base. The Yale man scrambled wildly back, but the ball was there before him. Williams fielded the next man out at first.

"Come on! Let's find him!" sang out Duncan, and dashed down the aisle before the rising crowd got under way. Sam followed. They rushed out into the field and made for the close circle gathering rapidly round the catcher.

"I'll wait for you," said Sam. "He won't care anything about me."

"Won't he!" cried Duncan. "Come and see!" And dragging Sam along behind him, he screwed his way into the cluster at the centre of which Owen was fighting off the vehement attentions of admirers. At the sight of Duncan he broke through the circle and pulled the boy in.

"Duncan Peck! I was wondering whether you were here. Didn't we have luck! Glad to see you, Archer. How are things at Seaton?"

But before the question could be answered, the questioner was rushed in another direction, and Sam and Duncan found themselves whirled to the outside of the circle.

Sam looked at his watch. "There's just forty-

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five minutes before the train leaves. We've got to hustle to catch it! We promised to take it, you know."

"I suppose we did," sighed Duncan. "I hate to leave now. I haven't seen Don at all. Go ahead!"

CHAPTER XXV

JUNE TO DECEMBER

It was well for our young men that they could share Owen's victory, for Patterson, their school captain, gave them none of their own to enjoy. A pitcher cannot win a game alone; and Patterson's cleverness availed only to keep the Hillbury score down; his followers balked his efforts with errors, and only O'Toole hit the Hillbury pitcher with any readiness.

After the Hillbury game, Sam focussed his interest on the college examinations. Mr. Alsop had at the last moment, with much misgiving, granted him a provisional recommendation in French; and Sam, eager no less to vindicate himself than to get rid of the troublesome subject, hammered away at it during the last few weeks with a determination worthy of a great cause. He was sure of his history and mathematics, and reasonably confident in Greek and Latin; but

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English, the crank-ridden, and French, the elusively easy, mocked him with promise of failure.

Duncan likewise yielded himself to the spirit of industry which was turning 7 Hale into the workshop of scholastic cyclops. The latch was kept down perpetually during these days of preparation. Only Duncan's tutor, the useful Moorhead, and occasionally the irresistible Bruce found entrance. Duncan was at last serious; actually confronted by the alternative of passing certain examinations and going to Harvard, or failing and going to work, he understood that the time for trifling was past. It is safe to say that Sam Archer's example and encouragement, and Moorhead's patient readiness to explain and help, were of more use to Duncan in his weary battle than class instruction or tutor's drill.

Duncan did pass his examinations, — he fell sprawling, but across the line, — and Archer got every point he had worked for. He missed an honor which he had hoped to get, but he triumphed in Mr. Alsop's subject with a C, which, boy-like, he regarded as a decision awarded him against the teacher's doubts, not as a proof of good in-

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struction. There followed for Sam an untroubled summer of loafing and tennis, rowing and sailing; of reckless squandering of time on pure play; of reading books that were not required and dreaming dreams of triumphs that would never come to pass. He took back with him to school greater physical vigor and clearer comprehension of his own personal problem.

Sam settled with Moorhead very comfortably in his old room, and entered upon the tasks of his senior year with the quiet purpose of making it count. To accomplish this, he understood vaguely but sufficiently that he must keep himself, physically and morally, under good control, must work steadily rather than frantically, and pursue a sane ambition. This sane ambition, so far as athletics were concerned, lay along the hurdle path. Unless some phenomenon unexpectedly appeared, he could reasonably count on becoming the school champion in the high hurdles. To be school champion, however, was but a half-success. The Seatonian grudges honor to a man who leads merely because there happens to be no one better. The Seaton champion must prevail over the

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champions of other schools, if he is to have the credit of achievement.

Sam knew this quite as well as any one else; he appreciated its personal bearing as no one else could. In the background of every picture called up by a hopeful imagination, hovered the figure of Kilham of Hillbury. Wherever Sam foresaw a chance of distinction, there was Kilham to contest it with him. At the winter competition in Boston, at the interscholastic games, in the Hillbury-Seaton dual meet, he must struggle against this quick-starting, strong-running rival, who was at least half a second better on the high-hurdle course. Should he ever be able to beat that fellow? Sam considered his own vain endeavors to put speed into his long legs, and confessed frankly that the odds were heavy against him. But none the less, being of the smilingly persistent kind, he went on with his practice undaunted, as if he had battles to win instead of to lose. He also gave close attention to his school work. Birdie Fowle informed him one day that he was no good any more; Moorhead had made a grind out of him. Sam's laughing comment was that he

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wanted to get into college decently if possible, with a point or two to the good. This was true, but it was not the fundamental reason for his devotion to his studies.

During the summer Archer had run across a Hillburyite named Denton, at the seashore. When he inquired of this Hillburyite what kind of a fellow Kilham was, Denton declared him the very finest sort of a fellow. Later Sam chanced to ask how Kilham did in his studies, and Denton returned a report distinctly favorable; he was not the very best, of course, but much better than the average. Sam considered these facts a full week. At the end of that time he had made up his mind that if he had to run second to Kilham in the hurdles, he wouldn't fall behind in the classroom, too. This secretly nourished ambition to maintain a rank that he need not be ashamed to have compared with that of his Hillbury rival, increased rather than diminished as the year slipped away. Certain teachers who grew from month to month more complacent over their stimulating influence on Archer, would have been much surprised to learn that the steady up trend of his rank line was

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due to an unacknowledged, unreal competition with a student in another school.

Sam's fall hurdle practice was interrupted by the summons to class football. Before the season was far advanced, the captain of the senior team was promoted to the first eleven squad, and Sam was chosen captain in his place. With the care of his eleven and the class games and the duty of punting to practise the school backs, Sam found small opportunity to play with his pair of hurdles.

The season was a fortunate one for the school eleven, and still more fortunate for Mulcahy, who stepped in mid-season into the shoes of a big tackle who had ignominiously succumbed to the measles; and he kept his place through half the Hillbury game. He was thus a member of a victorious school eleven, in a position to reap the glory of the successful efforts of others. As a matter of fact, the game was won by Kendrick, or by Kendrick and Illerton, the new end, together, after the line had been ignobly crowded to and fro, up and down the field, for three quarters of the playing time. But a victory is a victory,

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and Mulcahy retained his good share of the prestige which the members of a winning team enjoy.

He made immediate use of this prestige to attain a long-cherished ambition. In the fall of the previous year, and again in the spring, he had been balked in his efforts to become president of the Laurel Leaf, largely through the influence of Duncan Peck and his following. Duncan Peck was now gone and many new fellows had come. This time Mulcahy adopted less open methods of soliciting. Swan was his manager, a natural politician who loved the excitement of a campaign. Swan cared nothing about Mulcahy, but was down on Archer, who had scorned an invitation to join the Mu Nu, Swan's fraternity, which ranked as the "yaller dog" of school societies. Sam and Moorhead tried to persuade Kendrick to run for the Leaf, and failed. Then they fell back on Blankenberg, a substitute on the eleven, who possessed solid qualities and would have filled the office with dignity. Then it was that Swan whisked into the field to the support of the candidate whom Archer opposed.

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The contest was uneven. On the one side Mulcahy, football player, editor of the "Seatonian," ready-tongued, of imposing personality, offering a fine show, both of talent and of school spirit; on the other Blankenberg, plain, honest, conscientious, modest. Mulcahy triumphed with votes to throw away. He came over to Blankenberg after the affair was over with a very pretty display of personal sympathy.

"I'm sorry you didn't get it, really I am," he said. "I shouldn't take it if so many hadn't voted for me."

"I'm glad you won, if the majority want you," returned Blankenberg, honestly.

"I think your manager lost you votes," Mulcahy went on, pretending to joke, but avoiding Sam's eye. "I wouldn't trust him again."

Blankenberg and Sam walked out together. "Isn't he the limit," exploded Sam, when they were alone, "for pulling the wool over people's eyes! He's got everybody on the string from the faculty to Dunbar Hall, and he hasn't a principle to his name. The school's training that fellow for a political boss."

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"He didn't need to be unprincipled to win to-night," remarked Blankenberg. "It was too easy. I rather think he'll find some way of getting 'most anything he wants."

Sam struggled with an impulse to quote Mulcahy's statement that his supreme ambition was to win the Yale Cup; but the feeling that Mulcahy had spoken in confidence prevented his mention of it. It seemed quite reasonable now that this ambition should be attained.

"There's one thing he can't get," he said with pardonable bitterness, "class day offices. The class knows him too well."

But therein Sam was mistaken. The Omega Omicron clashed with the Alpha Beta Gamma over the election of President of the Day, neither being willing to give in to the other. As a result, the unfraternified, moulded into a temporarily coherent force through the influence of the vengeful Swan and the despised Mu Nu, united on Mulcahy and swept him into office.

"There seems to be nothing that that fellow can't rake in if he tries," Sam grumbled to himself, as he swung moodily homeward from the

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class election. "Of course you'd expect the faculty to be fooled, but here's half the class voting for him when nine out of every ten know he's a rotten fakir. Think of our bringing all our relatives to class day, and that fellow sitting up on the platform as the representative man of the graduating class of Seaton Academy! The Yale Cup? — Mulcahy, of course! Anything he wants. He's our color-bearer, sure enough! Rah, rah, rah, Mulcahy!"

CHAPTER XXVI

JANUARY TO MAY

THE hurrying weeks brought Sam once more face to face with his rival of Hillbury. Again one of thirty-odd numbers, he mingled with the confused throng of candidates near the starting line of the forty-yard hurdles in Mechanics' Hall.

"Who's that fellow with the blue stripes across his shirt?" asked a boy at his elbow, who wore the colors of a Boston school.

Sam gave his benighted neighbor a sharp glance of surprise. "That's Kilham of Hillbury!"

"Any good?"

"Good enough to beat me!" returned Sam.

"I guess it lies between Sage of Worcester and Doane of Noble's," said the lad.

Sam smiled grimly. He knew that it lay between Kilham of Hillbury and — somebody else.

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The first heat was run: Kilham led at the tape; Sage of Worcester fell out. In the second heat Number Eighteen was at the fore, — the programme showed Number Eighteen to be Archer of Seaton. The third went to Doane of Noble's; the fourth to Jessop of Boston Latin; the fifth — but why detail the process of sifting? The final heat was called. In it stood Kilham, Archer, Doane, Whelan of the Boston High, and a nameless white shirt from a small school, who by luck and good natural ability had squeezed through the early heats.

Kilham gave Sam a nod of recognition. "We've been up against each other before."

Sam smiled assent. "Twice."

"And shall be again, probably. Don't let those small school fellows beat us, anyway. If I can't win, I hope you will."

"The same to you," answered Sam; but his voice was lost in the starter's call.

On the "set" Doane tried to beat the starter, and was put back a foot. All hung well on the next trial, and the pistol shot sent them away. Doane flashed into the front rank at the outset,

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but he was clumsy on the second hurdle and lost his advantage. Kilham and Archer rose from the start together. Kilham reached the first hurdle a foot ahead, but Archer gained on the hurdle jump. It was the same on the second. At the third hurdle, four runners seemed to sweep the air abreast, but Doane and Whelan lost a fraction of a second in clearing, and fell a foot behind Kilham and Archer. On the final stretch the Hillbury man drove himself to the front. Sam strained at his sluggish muscles with every power of nerve and brain, but Kilham was the faster. Sam's frantic efforts, though insufficient to carry him past Kilham, at least enabled him to hold a place ahead of his pursuers. He crossed the line second, adjudged to have the better of Whelan by a few inches.

"What do you honestly think, Collins?" demanded Sam, as the two talked over the day's happenings on the train that evening. "Shall I ever be able to beat that fellow, or is he going to do me right along for the next four years?"

"I don't know," returned Collins, frankly. "Kilham's a mighty good hurdler for a schoolboy,

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but he isn't the best there ever was. I've seen him weaken a good bit on the last thirty yards of the one-twenty. You're about even on starting, and he's faster, but you've got the staying power. It'll depend on how you learn to take the hurdles. You wouldn't have the ghost of a show on the low ones, but on the high — well, I've seen a lot of good men beaten on the last twenty yards of the high hurdles."

Such was the dubious form which Collins's encouragement took. Collins believed thoroughly in the efficacy of work; he was also convinced that Archer was slowly "coming," but he was not one to raise false hopes.

"Then you really think I can improve on the hurdle work?" pursued Sam.

"Of course. You jump too high, and that first stride when you come down is too long. You bring your outer foot around well, but it goes out too far. You ought to better that a good bit in the spring practice."

Whatever Collins may have expected from the spring training, he had no reason to complain of Sam's diligence. The average boy will work

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with great zeal for the first and last weeks of his preparation for an important contest. He usually starts with enthusiasm, allows his ardor to ebb under the tiresome monotony of the daily drudgery, and warms to his work again as the crisis approaches. And not infrequently does it happen that the loss by this middle period of neglect proves so serious that the candidate drops out discouraged before the test arrives. It was one of Collins's strong points as a trainer that he tried to carry his charges all the way. He did not trust all reports or accept every excuse. He strove to know what his boys were doing, how they were spending their time, what they ate and drank, where they went. He made no apologies for searching closely into the lives which the boys were leading. Unless they lived properly, played honorably, worked faithfully, he would have none of them.

If Collins had possessed a magic wand by the touch of which slow muscles could be endowed with marvellous speed, he certainly would have given Archer the benefit of the first application of it. Sam took the privations of training, as

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well as the regular drill, as parts of his normal day. While he longed to win, and still dreamed of the happy moment when he should show his back to Kilham on the hurdle path, he could laugh good-naturedly at his ambitions, and speak frankly of the likelihood of failure. He did not worry and did not lose courage. He played tennis, enjoyed his friends, did his school work as well as he could, got good hours of rest, shunned the things that weaken,—and grew hard of muscle and sound of wind, living his life with happiness and zest.

Toward the end of May he was sent with a batch of Seatonians to take part in the interscholastics in Cambridge. In the final of the one-twenty hurdles, he fell in once more with Kilham and Doane of Noble's.

"Hello, Archer!" called Kilham, cheerily. "We meet again. It's your turn to-day."

"I wish it was," said Sam.

But luck turned against him. The starter held them a long time on the set, and Sam fell over before the trigger was pulled. He was put back a yard. On the next attempt he erred

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through overcaution, and lost another yard on the start. Always slow in getting into his stride, he saw his two rivals dash well ahead of him for the first two hurdles. As Sam was topping the third, Kilham and Doane were close to the fourth. Hopeless though the race seemed, he pressed on, taking his jumps in his best form, driving himself in the inter-hurdles paces, as if each were the finish of the race. And lo! he gained! With every hurdle he drew up on the leading pair. At the eighth he was at Doane's heels. The tenth he crossed abreast of the second man and beat him out through greater strength in the final dash for the line, — but Kilham as usual was first, this time by only two feet.

For a time Sam was disheartened. When he compared the two feet advantage which Kilham had over him at the finish with the two yards lost at the start, and realized that he had plenty of reserve force on the last stretch while Kilham was running weak, he felt that fate was indeed against him. But Collins soon got hold of him and altered the hue of his thoughts. He had never before been put back in a race; it wouldn't

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happen again; he had run a yard farther than the victor and finished but two feet behind him. He would have another chance at the Hillbury meet; let him but keep up his courage and work hard, and he would win out yet!

Yes, keep up your courage and work! That had been Collins's song these two years. But what availed courage and work against fate and a better man?

"He'll probably beat me," thought Sam, as the day of the Hillbury meet approached; "he'll probably beat me, for he always has beaten me, but I'll run him harder than I've ever done before!"

On the day before the meet, Sam dropped in at the Sedgwicks' to offer two tickets to the games, which his father had written that he could not use. Margaret clapped her hands with delight at the prospect. "We must go, mother, and see Sam win. It's our last chance. Do go!"

"It's my last chance, all right," said Sam, "but don't go expecting me to win. I always lose."

"You'll have to win, if we go. And we are going, aren't we, mother?"

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"We'll see," answered the cautious mother. "Sam had better stay to dinner and talk it over with your father."

"Invite me next week, and I'll come with joy," answered Sam, ruefully. "You have too many good things to eat for a fellow in training."

Mrs. Sedgwick and Margaret were on the Seaton special that carried the school to Hillbury. Sam sat in the seat opposite them, and for the time enjoyed complete relief from anxious thoughts of the contest. They parted at the station, when Sam went forward to join the other members of the team in the barge that was awaiting them.

"You must show me your gold medal when we go back," said the girl, gayly, as she bade him good luck. "You know we've come on purpose to help you win it." Sam lifted his cap and ran smilingly away to quiet the barge-load of impatiently who were clamoring for Archer to quit his "fussing" and get aboard. Miss Margaret's blind confidence had driven Sam's fatalism to cover. Could it be his day after all?

CHAPTER XXVII

ARCHER *versus* KILHAM

It was clear, two events before the high hurdles came, that Hillbury was to win the day. In four races Seaton had been beaten by feet and inches in desperate finishes. It may have been luck that the leaders in these four contests were Hillbury men; luck certainly had nothing to do with the fact that in each of the four the third prize went to a wearer of the blue. Kilham had taken the two-twenty hurdles; Hillbury with Kilham in the lead had swept every place in the broad jump. Mulcahy could crawl no higher than third in the pole vault. Collins took the issue philosophically, as a man might well do who had toiled early and late to work second-class material into a first-class product, and who, incidentally, had accomplished more than any three members of the faculty toward establishing throughout the school a standard of right living and honest striving.

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But stoically as Collins took the issues of fate, his real feelings broke through the mask of calmness when the one-twenty hurdles were called, and Sam and Pearson, wearing Seaton colors, took the places assigned them and dug their starting holes. Defeat may have its consolations; and to Collins no consolation could be quite so satisfactory as a victory for his long-legged pupil, who had done his work month in and month out like a man of years and responsibilities, and had come up smiling after every knockdown, with determination unquenched. Miss Margaret, on the Seaton benches near the finish line, strained her eyes to see the starting, oblivious to the fact that her pulse was beating ten counts faster than it had any right to. Sam himself, having something definite to do, and something definite to think of, was less agitated than Miss Margaret, or even Collins. The something definite to think of was the uncommon solidity of the Hillbury hurdles. If he struck one, it would throw him — or at least so he feared. He must be sure to clear, even at the waste of a few inches; and unnecessary inches in the rise

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meant, he knew full well, a fraction of a second in total loss. On the full extent of this handicap he did not dwell. It was enough that he must keep well above the hurdles.

The start was even—at least for Kilham and Archer. They sprang for the first hurdle in step together, like well-matched horses. Sam's leap was needlessly high; Kilham gained thereby a small advantage, which he increased to a yard as the third hurdle was passed. Then Sam, becoming less fearful of the rise, brought his jump down nearer the top of the hurdle and began to regain lost ground. On the fifth they were together again. After that Sam forged ahead, clearing every obstacle just in front of his rival. As he struck the ground after the tenth he realized that his hopes depended on his holding his advantage against a faster sprinter for a distance of less than fifteen yards. He had been running at full tension throughout the race; he could do no better now.

As the runners swept past the seats where sat Mrs. Sedgwick and Margaret, the girl uttered a trembling scream of joy which was drowned in the disorderly cries of the Seaton followers. Archer

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was ahead! The blue hurled shouts of encouragement at their struggling champion, who tore along after his rival. Seaton yelled congratulations and encouragement, and Hillbury encouragement and congratulations, for Kilham did close up on Archer. The Seatonians thought they had it, and then feared that they had lost it; while the Hillburyites feared loss, and later exulted in the thought that they had won. It all happened in the shortest possible time, and at first nobody knew the result, not even the judges. Collins, who stood on a line with the finish, said it was very close, but it looked like Archer; Bruce declared that it was Archer by six inches; the Hillburyites capered about, shouting that Kilham had it by a foot. One judge said Archer; the second Kilham; the other wasn't sure. Kilham ran off to his rub-down straightway; Sam lingered, panting on Collins's shoulder, to hear the decision. Of course it was not for him to judge the race, but he had felt the worsted thread tighten against his breast, and he knew that a beaten man never brushes the finish cord.

The judges conferred and reported to the

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announcer, who bellowed forth the news: a tie! Whereat all hands applauded, except the special friends of either contestant, who agreed in considering it "a steal," but disagreed as to the party whose rights had been stolen. Sam's first emotion was one of grievous disappointment. Kilham had beaten him often — but this time! After all, it might have been worse. The judges might have given the first place to Kilham, and adjudged him second. Judges are but mortal. The thought of the fate escaped comforted him in a measure for the disappointment. At any rate, he was not a loser. He had won the race as much as Kilham had.

An official appeared with the medals in his hand, pretty shining things, one gold, the other silver, bedded on heavy ribbons marked with the colors of the two schools.

"You'll have to toss for these," he said in a businesslike way. "Where's the other fellow?"

The other fellow had disappeared. Richmond Noyes, the Hillbury baseball captain, pushed forward. "Kilham's gone to get his rub-down," he said. "I'll toss for him."

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The official hesitated a moment as if uncertain as to the propriety of the substitution, but a colleague reassured him. "All right! You call, Archer!" he said, and his practised hand sent a coin spinning in the air.

"Tails!" cried Sam, who had drawn an induction from several experiences that tails were luckier for him than heads.

The official stooped and picked up the coin. "Heads it is!" he announced cheerfully.

Noyes clutched the gold medal and scurried away in quest of Kilham. Sam took his portion of the spoil, and dodging alike compliments and condolences, went his leisurely way toward the Seaton quarters. Could anything be more symbolic than that toss! When after two years of uphill work he was at last wholly ready to meet Kilham in a square, even race, those heavy, clumsy hurdles had to turn up and lose him three or four feet; of course! Kilham, actually beaten by some inches, was considered by the wall-eyed judges to have led; of course! With equal chance to draw the gold medal, he must needs get the silver; of course! Did ever any one have such luck!

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"Archer! Oh, Archer! Hold on!"

Sam turned in the direction of the unfamiliar voice and beheld trotting toward him a bare-headed youth, whose chief article of attire was a bath robe. Behind the bath robe strode Noyes, his blue-ribboned hat tilted back on his head, wearing upon his face an expression of desperate disgust.

"Look here, Archer," began Kilham, eagerly, while still a dozen feet away, "I don't want this thing. It belongs to you."

The "thing" in question was the gold medal, which Noyes had carried off in a burst of delight but a few minutes before. "Give me the other one and take this," Kilham went on, holding out the first prize to the astonished Seatonian.

"Why?" asked Sam, blankly.

"Because I won't take it, because it doesn't belong to me, because Rich here had no business to butt in and get it. I didn't want to toss for the thing."

A look of eager joy flashed into Sam's face, only to fade away again as the character of the offer which Kilham was making came home to him. It was generous of Kilham, who had lots of prizes,

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to refuse to deprive his rival of the only good one which he had ever won. It was a fine thing to do; but Sam could not profit by the pitying generosity of a kind-hearted rival.

"It didn't make any difference who tossed for it," said Sam. "We accepted Noyes as your representative. The judges gave the race a tie, and we tossed for prizes. That settled it."

"It didn't settle anything," returned Kilham, warmly. "Noyes had no more authority to toss for me than that kid there. I didn't win the race and I'm not going to take the prize. You won the race. I almost got you at the finish, but not quite. You touched that thread before I did. I'm sure of it."

Sam stared and pondered. "The judges declared it a tie," he said at length.

"Then it will have to be a tie so far as the official record goes. We can't dispute the judges, but we can divide the prizes as they ought to be divided. I won the second prize. I'll have that or none!"

"Then I'll take the gold one," decided Sam, in a subdued voice. When the exchange was effected,

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he held out his hand to his old rival, who seemed to him at that moment more unreachable than ever, and blurted out, "If there are many fellows like you in Hillbury, I wish I had gone there!"

So it happened that Sam Archer really did have a gold medal to show Miss Margaret when he met her again at the train, and with it a little tale to tell of schoolboy honesty and generosity.¹

¹ If this incident of the medal sounds like the invention of an unpractical moralist, the author pleads innocent to the charge. It is a fairly accurate account of an actual occurrence at a recent Exeter-Andover contest.

CHAPTER XXVIII

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WITH the passing of the Hillbury meet, Archer's career as a school athlete was at an end. He played tennis and scrub ball, but this was play, not work. His training now was for quite another kind of contest—the final wrestling match with the college examinations. He shared as a helpless onlooker in the disaster of the annual ball game, when Noyes's nine after a hard fight took the Seatonians into camp. The football men were the only victors of the year, since even in tennis honors were divided. Sam smiled to himself somewhat grimly as he considered how fortune had coöperated with Mulcahy in his ambitions for the Yale Cup. Against the background of defeated teams, the football men bulked large as athletes.

Mrs. Archer came up to be present at the festivities of graduation week. With Mrs. Sedgwick

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and Margaret, she started early for the chapel exercises with which the school year formally closed. As they crossed the yard, the seniors were forming in a long, uneven double line that extended from the steps of the main school building across the lawn toward the outer fence. Late risers were scurrying from the dormitories, struggling, on the run, to work their arms into the sleeves of their gowns and at the same time to keep their mortar-boards safely balanced on their heads. The marshals were zealously and more or less effectually ordering the jeering battalion. Sam, looking like a giant in the ample gown that covered his bony length, raised his cap over a face glowing with satisfaction as the three visitors passed the head of the line, hurrying to reach their places before the procession took the right of way. "He's a dear boy," thought the mother with pride, "if he is not a genius. He does the best he can."

They were given seats on the side aisle, well to the front; the middle section was reserved for the class. Before the platform stood a heavy table. On it were the score of prizes to be

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assigned, piles of books, impressive envelopes containing the money awarded, and in the midst, towering in cold stateliness above two minor brethren, the shining form of the Yale Cup. Solemn faces of benefactors and famous graduates looked down disapprovingly from the walls; there had been no such lavish display of prizes in the simple old days when they were members of the school, reciting Latin and Greek by candle-light to austere, dignified gentlemen who revered Cicero as the model for all language and ignored French and German as the lingo of dancing-masters and fiddlers. Flanking the platform and facing the audience, ran a long line of chairs — “for the faculty,” whispered Mrs. Sedgwick, who had been present on such occasions before.

Presently the tramp of feet was heard, and the seniors filed in for their last chapel service. They stood, when they reached their places, waiting for the dignitaries, who were not slow to appear. The principal entered with the president of the board of trustees, two clergymen from abroad, others of the trustees who were in town, and a venerable alumnus or two to whom the school

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would do honor. These took places on the platform, in the alcove behind the reading desk. After them came the faculty, a motley line, in which staid elderly men, of the wisdom which is born of long intercourse with boys, touched shoulders with youths fresh from the university — in whom self-confidence and zeal must still do duty for ripe experience and sound judgment. When all were placed, the visiting clergymen conducted the simple devotional exercises, the hymns rolling with resonant vigor from two hundred masculine throats. Then the president of the board of trustees, encumbered by many typewritten sheets, came forward beside the desk for the formal business of the day.

He began by addressing certain neatly worded compliments to the graduating class. In this task, which was in the line of his daily work as an advocate before important courts, he acquitted himself with dignity and impressiveness. When, however, he came to the reading of the list of those entitled to diplomas, his experience in public speaking availed him little. He waded on, undaunted, through fourscore names, pro-

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nounceable and unpronounceable, drawn from all races and all lands. As each name was read or attempted, its claimant rose in response, until every wearer of a gown was on his feet. Then the diplomas were passed out in bunches to chosen delegates, who delivered them to their proper owners.

With a feeling of relief the president laid aside the catalogue of seniors, and took up the short list of honor men. After this he passed to those of the school who had earned "honorable mention," finding new pitfalls in untried combinations of letters which stood for certain deserving members of lower classes. With the next sheet began the announcement of prize-winners.

Here was the climax of the day. Many were the boys who listened with quick-beating hearts, hoping to hear the sound of their names; and many there were who listened in vain. The president announced the prize and the award; the secretary of the faculty took the prize from the table and handed it to the principal; the principal delivered it into the hands of its owner. As one and another came forward, flushed with

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happy embarrassment, and received the reward of his labor, the school gave abundant applause, those who had nourished no hopes and those who had hoped in vain uniting in generous congratulation of the victors. So went the Latin prizes, the Greek prizes, the prizes in English composition, in Mathematics, in Bible study, in History; the prize for general excellence in studies and that for physical development. Sam's interest was keen in the result, for he hoped to see his room-mate honored as a Latinist. He chuckled with delight as Moorhead was called a second time to the gift table, and brought back a sample from the pile of twelve large volumes of Shakespeare as a prize in English.

There were but three or four awards still to be made when Sam, seeing the secretary reach for the big three-handled cup that mounted guard over the remaining envelopes and books, knew that the time for Mulcahy's prize had come. He glanced backward curiously over his shoulder at the astute strategist who sat a few seats away, and marked with amused interest the artful mask of indifference which the young man wore. So fascinating

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was this study of Mulcahy the expectant, and Mulcahy the ready-to-be-surprised, that Sam very impolitely kept his eyes on the face in the row behind until the president had finished the long description: "The Yale Cup, given by the Yale Club of Boston to the Senior who best combines proficiency in athletics with good standing in his studies." As the reader paused, Sam faced front and prepared to applaud the name of John Joseph Mulcahy,—but the name the president read was "Samuel Wadsworth Archer"!

The applause thundered forth sudden and sharp, no perfunctory service of courtesy, but a burst of enthusiastic approval that swept the whole student company. It rose and fell and rose again, vehement and long drawn out. The boys in front twisted their heads around as they strove, still beating their palms, to catch a glimpse of the winner; those in the seats behind craned their necks with the same laudable design. And Sam sat with downcast eyes and glowing cheeks, hearing but not believing, stupidly delaying the exercises, yet hardly daring to answer the sum-

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mons; until Westbrook, who sat beside him, stopped clapping long enough to dig him in the ribs with a sharp elbow and enjoin him: "Go and get it, you fool. Don't you see you're keeping the whole business waiting?" To this exhortation Sam gave heed.

During the remainder of the exercises Sam sat with the precious cup clutched beneath his gown, ecstatically demanding of himself again and again how it could possibly be, and pitying the unfortunate whose deep-laid plans had gone so wholly wrong. When the audience was dismissed, he was at once overwhelmed by boys who insisted on shaking his hand and slapping his shoulder and telling him that the award was "just right,"—and, of course, handling the cup.

Mrs. Archer, on her side, was a general target for congratulations. She received them with the composure of a mother who is never wholly surprised at any honor bestowed upon her son; but in her eyes burned a light of happiness and excitement that belied her quiet manner, and her gaze would wander to the group of gowns that thronged her tall son and hid the white gleam

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of silver from the sight of the unprivileged curious.

"How did he happen to get it?" she asked Dr. Leighton, as the teacher came to offer his compliments. "I'm sure he hadn't the slightest expectation of its coming to him."

"Of course he didn't expect it," returned Dr. Leighton. "The boy who deserves such a prize rarely expects it. I can tell you how it came to be awarded to him, because I was on the committee. He won it by good honest work. It was what he accomplished, not what he chanced to do, that turned the scales in his favor."

Mrs. Archer's look indicated that she was not quite sure that she understood; but before she could ask further, her son broke through the circle of students, and came, sheepishly dangling the cup by one of its heavy handles, to greet his mother. Sam was not sufficiently experienced in prize-winning to take his honors easily, especially when Margaret Sedgwick roguishly assumed a clean record of A's as a part of his title to the cup, and insisted on knowing all details. He

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managed to escape these embarrassing attentions by calling up Moorhead and presenting him as the banner prize-catcher of the class; and presently, on the pretext of helping his room-mate carry home his load of Shakespeares, he succeeded in getting safely away.

The next morning when Sam called at the Sedgwicks' to see his mother, he found her on the garden piazza, with a Boston paper on her lap.

"There's a whole column here about the Commencement," she said, as Sam sat down beside her. "Don't you want to see it?"

Sam laughed contentedly. "I don't need to read about it; I was there."

"And beside it is a report from the Hillbury Commencement, too. Prizes aren't so plenty in Hillbury. There seem to be hardly half as many as are given here."

The prizes at Hillbury possessed small interest for Sam. He was satisfied to lounge quietly in the comfortable chair, let his eyes wander over the profusion of gay flowers in the old-fashioned garden, and gloat in silence on the fact that school recitations were, for him, forever finished. All

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at once he straightened up in his chair and demanded:—

“Who got the Yale Cup down there? I wonder if it’s any one I know?”

“In Hillbury?” answered Mrs. Archer, taking up the paper again. “Let me see—the Orton prize, the Harper prize, the—oh, yes, the Yale Cup: Winthrop Joy Kilham.”

“Kilham!” cried Sam, in a sudden accession of spirit. “Kilham! That’s great! The judges hit the bull’s-eye that time, for sure!”

mw



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